Who's who in the cast of 'Da King's' inner court

Story Below, Col. 1

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

HK maid has no SARS; DOH lifts quarantine

By Blanche S. Rivera

IT'S not SARS.

The Department of Health yesterday cleared the domestic helper from Hong Kong of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Results of the antibody tests carried out by the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) showed that M.D., 42,

HK MAID/ A4

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Mike Arroyo nephew, 9 others die in mishaps**
  METRO/A17
- **NBI set to bring Atong Ang home**
  NEWS/A3
- **Forex reserves hit $16.8B**
  BUSINESS/B1

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website: www.inq7.net

Erap: It's FPJ over knees

He'll stay until May, opposition officials say

By Armand N. Nocum

POLITICS first before knee surgery.

Ousted President Joseph Estrada may forego the operation on his arthritic knees in the United States until after the May 10 presidential election to ensure the victory of actor Fernando Poe Jr., Estrada's political party Puwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP) said yesterday.

"He is having second thoughts of leaving because he does not want to leave his friend (Poe)," newly designated PMP spokesperson Rufus Rodriguez told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Ernesto Maceda, a senatorial candidate in Poe's ticket, said Estrada had told aides that his knee could hold up for four more months.

Rodriguez, a former immigration commissioner, said Estrada would rather stay in the country to help unify the opposition.

The opposition is divided into two factions—a group led by Poe, standard-bearer of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) and the camp of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, presidential candidate of a faction of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

Opposition politicians fear a split vote would allow President Macapagal-Arroyo, who has been lagging in the popularity polls, to come from behind and win the election.

But Sen. Loi Ejercito mentioned a different reason. Ejercito

ERAP PICKS/ A6

MILLIONS have been raised from permit to campaign fees, according to the New People's Army. But the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines denies reports it plans to intensify offensives. This photo was taken in the hinterlands of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, an NPA stronghold in Mindanao where Lakas officials reportedly negotiated the campaign payments.

NDF says GMA allies paid campaign fees

By PDI Mindanao Bureau

LIANGA, Surigao del Sur—The communist-led National Democratic Front has claimed that political allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo had paid the "permit to campaign" (PTC) fees demanded by the NDF from all candidates despite her orders not to do so.

Jorge Madlos, NDF spokesperson in Mindanao, said his group had collected "millions" in PTC fees not only from candidates allied with Ms Macapagal but also those identified with presidential aspirants Raul Roco and Panfilo Lacson.

"No one is exempted from the taxation," Madlos told reporters here on Tuesday. According to him, all candidates running in the May 10 elections must pay the PTC fee to be able to campaign in rebel-controlled areas.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay, a stalwart of the ruling Lakas-CMD, earlier held talks with top communist leaders in Mindanao. He was accompanied by Surigao City Mayor Alfonso Cassura, Cagayan de Oro City Mayor Vicente Emano and Surigao del Sur Gov. Vicente Pimentel, all of Lakas-CMD.

Pichay and his group conveyed to the rebels Ms Macapagal's offer for an extension of the Christmas ceasefire until after the May elections. The NDF rejected the offer.

After the negotiations, Pichay was seen by an INQUIRER correspondent being led to a separate meeting with top leaders of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Mindanao.

A rebel leader said Pichay negotiated the payment of PTC fees in behalf of Lakas national and local candidates.

Sought for comment by the INQUIRER, Pichay denied the rebel claim, saying Lakas would never pay any campaign fee to the NDF.

"No, the President will never pay," Pichay said, although he admitted that he could not speak for Ms Macapagal's allies in Mindanao.

NDF/ A6

Not so fast, Edsa 3 group warns Loren

By Armand Nocum

DESPITE Sen. Loren Legarda's pleasantries with a group loyal to Joseph Estrada, the majority of the "Edsa Tres" forces remains opposed to her inclusion in the opposition coalition ticket, the spokesperson of the People's Movement Against Poverty (PMAP) said yesterday.

In the first place, the group that Legarda met with on Tuesday is no longer aligned with the PMAP, said Von Mesina. It was the PMAP that provided the muscle for the bloody Labor Day siege of Malacañang in 2001.

"It will take more than a couple of club sandwiches and candid

NOT SO/ A6

JOE GALVEZ/CONTRIBUTOR

A DISTANCE of two warm bodies keeps feuding Senators Lacson and Angara at bay in Zamboanga City at the wake of the late Mayor Ma. Clara Lobregat. Rep. Celso Lobregat and Rep. Butz Aquino constitute the buffer zone.

Solon reminds GMA that she owes Alvarez

By Cynthia D. Balana

A RANKING ruling party leader yesterday reminded President Macapagal-Arroyo that she owed her position to party spokesperson Heherson Alvarez who has been excluded from the administration coalition's senatorial slate in favor of oppositionists identified with ousted President Estrada.

Ms Macapagal would not have become President if Alvarez had not initiated the impeachment complaint against Estrada, said Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras.

"Alvarez is right. It was Alvarez who started it. [He] should be credited with starting the impeachment of Estrada which resulted in the installation of GMA," he said.

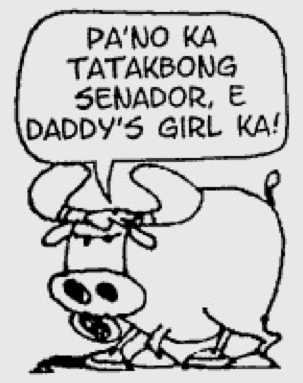
Paras said most Lakas-CMD members supported and sympathized with Alvarez and would protest his being junked to accommodate former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago.

If Santiago makes it to the administration ticket and not Alvarez, Paras said he and more than 20 Lakas representatives would bolt the ruling party in protest.

Another group of Lakas representatives, however, stood by the President, defending her from Alvarez's attacks.

The pro-Macapagal congressmen—Prospero Nograles, Prospero Pichay, Assistant Majority

SOLON/ A4



FVR dashes daughter's Senate hopes

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

WHAT Daddy says, goes.

Former President Fidel Ramos has ordered his daughter Cristy to withdraw from presidential candidate Raul Roco's senatorial ticket, and she appears to have obeyed.

FVR/ A4

Who's who in the cast of 'Da King's' inner court

By Tony Bergonia and Jerry Esplanada

EVEN as opposition behemoth Miriam Defensor-Santiago demanded yesterday that Fernando Poe Jr. disclose the names of his advisers, the names of even the closest campaign aides to the movie king, except for two or three, are unknown.

They will never appear in the opening credits. But they play key roles in producing a real-life portrayal of the actor as presidential star in the May national election.

Three individuals who cast the biggest shadows on the screen are linked to Poe either by friendship or blood relations.

Carmelo Santiago, owner of the high-end steakhouse Melo's Restaurant and a very close ally of deposed President Joseph Estrada, serves as general overseer of Poe's campaign.

Estrada and Poe have been friends for at least 30 years.

According to sources inside the Poe campaign camp, Santiago's presence indicates the unseen hand of businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco in the running of the Poe campaign.

Santiago was appointed by Cojuangco as one of the members of the board of directors of food and beverage behemoth San Miguel Corp. during the term of Estrada.

They said the money that got Poe's campaign engine running came from the chair of the SMC, of which the action star is a constant product endorser for multimillion-peso fees.

It was Santiago, the sources said, who tapped the help of the multi-awarded former newsman Rod Reyes, press secretary during the Ramos and the Estrada presidencies, to head the media bureau of the Poe campaign.

Santiago and Reyes are brothers-in-law.

WHO'S WHO/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Southern Luzon, eastern Visayas and the whole of Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/01/08/04

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

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Second FRONT PAGE

Call for Con-con polls gains

By Carlito Pablo and Jerome Aning

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia Jr.'s renewed push for Charter change has gained ground as two major parties and the President's own campaign spokesperson yesterday endorsed his proposal for legislation to provide for the holding of simultaneous elections in May for delegates to a Constitutional convention to convene next August.

Leaders of the Liberal Party and Nationalist People's Coalition—the two major partners of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats in the House of Representatives—yesterday agreed to expedite the passage of the measure when Congress resumes sessions on Jan. 12.

LP president Rep. Florencio Abad welcomed De Venecia's suggestion to have the measure approved between Jan. 15 and Jan. 20 so the election of Con-con delegates can be held simultaneously with those of national and local officials next May.

"It will be tight because you need Senate concurrence but I believe we will have no problem in the House," Abad said.

Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Maranon, a bloc leader of the NPC, said his party has "consistently supported the campaign for Charter amendments."

Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesperson, yesterday described De Venecia's plan for the simultaneous election of national and Con-con delegates as feasible.

"If it can be done in the coming elections ... and you give it a year to discuss [the amendments] and the reforms would be implemented in 2007, that is also possible," said yesterday.

De Venecia has been encouraged to rush the passage of the Con-con bill by the President's supposed agreement to serve for only three years until 2007 if she wins in this year's elections, to pave the way for a shift to a parliamentary system in 2007.

But Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. called the proposal "foolish and unacceptable."

"Our legislators cannot and should not allow themselves to be used to rush the election of a Constitutional convention that is intended to fast track amendments to the 1987 Constitution," Guingona said in a press statement.

He said it would make a mockery of the May 2004 elections and "all right-thinking Filipinos" should reject it.

He accused Charter-change proponents of peddling the lie that if the President wins in May she would abandon her constitutionally mandated six-year term in 2007 to give way to a shift to the parliamentary system.

NPC Rep. Jesli Lapus warned that holding simultaneous elections for national officials and Con-con "may further add to the already complex problems facing the Commission on Elections' nationwide automation." *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*

What, no elections?

IS Malacañang preparing for a no-election scenario?

Opposition senatorial candidate Ernesto Maceda has painted a scenario of fearful Palace officials stopping the May 10 elections to avert a victory of movie star Fernando Poe Jr.

Maceda accused Malacañang of devising "a strategy to postpone or not to hold elections," citing as a sign House Speaker Jose De Venecia's sudden move the other day to resurrect the issue of Charter change.

The former senator warned of a "people's uproar" if the elections are stopped because he claimed the margin of votes by a winning Poe would be so wide, it would be impossible to cheat the popular actor.

De Venecia has proposed that Congress approve a bill to allow the simultaneous election in May of 212 delegates to a constitutional convention to amend the Charter.

Maceda said it was too late to revive the divisive issue.

He said that awaiting the passage of such a bill in the Senate would be a delay of two to three weeks in the printing of ballots, which is supposed to start on Jan. 16.

Maceda also claimed yesterday that he was informed by some Comelec commissioners that Malacañang had called them to reverse the decision recognizing only the leadership of Sen. Edgardo Angara of the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino.

"Is this a portent of things to come? I hope that the Comelec is not influenced by calls from Malacañang. I hope that Chair Abalos can clarify this matter," he said. ***Michael Lim Ubac***

FPJ slams door on Miriam

By Michael Ubac

HURTING from the insults and brickbats thrown his way by former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, action star Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday slammed the doors on the possibility of Santiago's re-joining the opposition Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP).

"She is definitely out of the KNP ticket," Poe said through former Sen. Ernesto Maceda, who talked with the leading presidential candidate early morning yesterday.

Both Maceda and Santiago are making a comeback bid for a Senate seat in May.

"I think so much water has passed under the bridge in terms of what she has been saying, so she can no longer re-join the coalition," said Maceda at a press conference in the Senate.

Maceda, along with former San Juan mayor Jinggoy Estrada, had been been included on the FPJ-Legarda ticket after Santiago and reelectionist Sen. John Osmeña bolted the opposition coalition and joined the administration party.

He believed that Santiago's repeated pronouncement discrediting Poe's choice of Sen. Loren Legarda as his running mate did not sit well with the actor and leaders of the coalition.

"That's why it's incompatible now to (accept her back)," said Maceda, who stressed that "suggestions that maybe she should be taken back if she's willing" was now water under the bridge.

Maceda added that it would be for the benefit of both Poe and Santiago "that they no longer re-join each other. Anyway, it's a definite matter, she's out of the KNP lineup."

According to Maceda, Rep. Imee Marcos would mostly likely take the place of Santiago.

"We are now waiting for a few more days for Congresswoman Imee Marcos to make up her mind. I understand from her that she is still determining the matter."

Maceda also ruled out the inclusion of Heherson Alvarez in the opposition ticket. "It won't be Miriam, it won't be Sonny Alvarez. There is already a choice, but I'm not authorized to reveal who will be the 12th candidate if and when Imee does not decide to finally run."

Asked about the ramifications of Santiago's decision to jump ship to the administration, Maceda was forthright in saying that she was not a loss to the KNP.

"Definitely not. I'm a stronger candidate than Miriam," said Maceda, eliciting chuckles from reporters. "I hope to see you again in the next six years."

Now, lawyer wants GMA disqualified

By Martin P. Marfil

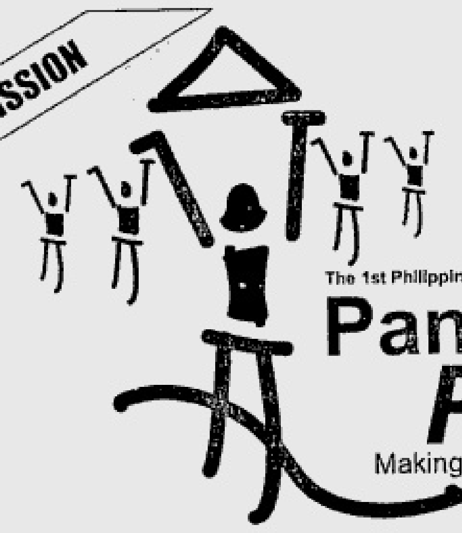
FIRST, he wanted Bro. Eddie junked from the list of candidates.

Now, lawyer Samson Alcantara has asked the Commission on Elections to deny the certificate of candidacy filed by President Macapagal-Arroyo, saying that the vow she made on Dec. 30, 2002 not to run for the presidency was legally binding.

In a five-page petition filed yesterday at the Comelec, Alcantara said: "She should not be allowed to make a pledge she does not intend to keep; otherwise, duplicity or deceit will be perpetuated as part of Philippine culture ... and *palabra de honor* (word of honor) becomes a thing of the past."

Alcantara, president of the group called Advocates and Adherents of Social Justice for School Teachers and Allied Workers or AASJS, earlier asked the Comelec to disqualify Villanueva saying that the candidacy of the evangelist violated the principle of separation of church and state.

FREE ADMISSION



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SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

JANUARY 9, 2004

10:30 A.M.	OPENING CEREMONIES	Megatrade Hall 3 Stage Area
	Invocation	Professor Grace Odal
	Philippine National Anthem	VSE Bulacan Theater Group
	Opening Number	Los Ruseñores
	Welcome Remarks	Mr. Robert Vance Pulley Country Director World Bank Philippines
	Closing Number	Streamline
	Symbolic Opening Rites	
	Tour of Exhibits	
	PERFORMANCES	
	Sustaining Performances	Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area
1:00 P.M	Los Ruseñores	
1.30 P.M	Himig Muntinlupa	
2.00 P.M.	Kaibigan Vocal Ensembles	
2.30 P.M.	Muntinlupa Dance Company	
7.00 P.M.	The Bayanihan, the National Folk Dance Co. of the Phils	
	ARTS & CRAFTS DEMONSTRATIONS	
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 NN	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
4:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
	KNOWLEDGE FORUM	
2:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Roundtable Discussions on Making Services Work for the Poor	Megatrade Function Rm. B
4:00 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.	Funders Forum. A Guide to Resources for NGOs & CSOs	Megatrade Function Rm. B & Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area (Parallel Sessions)

JANUARY 10, 2004

5:30 P.M. - 9:30 P.M.	CLOSING CEREMONIES AND AWARDS NIGHT (BY INVITATION ONLY)	Megatrade Hall 3 Stage Area
	Invocation	Hangad Music Ministry
	Philippine National Anthem	VSE Bulacan Theater Group
		Welcome Remarks Mr. Robert Vance Pulley Country Director World Bank Philippines
	Keynote Address	The Hon. Corazon C. Aquino Former President Republic of the Philippines
	Closing Remarks	Secretary Camilo Sabio Lead Convenor National Anti-Poverty Commission
	Cocktails	
	Announcement of the 1st Batch of Winners	
	Intermission Number	
	Announcement of the 2nd Batch of Winners	
	Intermission Number	
	Announcement of the 3rd Batch of Winners	
	Closing Number	
	PERFORMANCES	
	Sustaining Performances	Megatrade Hall 2 Stage Area
11:00 A.M	Hangad Music Ministry	
1:00 P.M	Pahimis Dance Troupe	
	Amanahis	
2:00 P.M.	Halili Cruz School of Ballet	
	ARTS & CRAFTS DEMONSTRATIONS	
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 NN	NVRC Cotton Weaving,	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
4:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.	NVRC Cotton Weaving	Luzon Vignette
	Leyte Banig Weaving	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Cloth Weaving	Mindanao Vignette
7:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.	Bicol Clay Pot Making	Luzon Vignette
	Cebu Guitar Making	Visayas Vignette
	Davao del Sur Beads and Accessory-making	Mindanao Vignette
	KNOWLEDGE FORUM	
3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.	Showcasing Success in Development Innovation & Lessons Learned in Implementation: Past DM Winners Panel Discussion	Megatrade Hall 2 Exhibit Stage

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NBI forms team to bring Atong home

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation has formed a team to fetch fugitive Charlie "Atong" Ang from Las Vegas and bring him back to the country to face plunder charges.

NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said they received an alert from their counterpart in the US to form the team. This means that Ang's extradition will take place soon, although the US has yet to set a date for the extradition.

Once the US sets the date, it cannot be easily changed, he added.

The two-man team will be composed of agents from the NBI's Interpol division which will be headed by Interpol chief Ricardo Diaz.

Earlier, Judge Lawrence Leavitt of the District Court of Nevada dismissed the two arguments presented by Ang's lawyer to dispute his extradition to the country.

Ang's lawyers argued that there is no corresponding plunder law in the United States, and with the absence of similar laws, Ang could not be extradited. His lawyers also disputed the admissibility of a videotaped conversation between Ang and jueteng whistleblower Luis "Chavit" Singson as evidence.

US to extradite wanted bank exec

A FORMER manager of a Manila-based bank wanted since 2001 for qualified theft of over P51 million is set to be extradited to the country next week after being arrested in New Jersey last year.

The suspect, Jerry E. Sy, was nabbed by United States authorities last year. He did not oppose extradition and volunteered to be returned to the country.

Sy is expected to arrive in the Philippines on Jan. 12 with two agents from the NBI's Interpol Division.

Sy, the NBI said, was wanted for allegedly causing the withdrawal of over P51 million from the accounts of various trusted clients of the bank he was working for, and later transferring the money to his own account.

Sy reportedly later fled to the Unites States after also transferring the money to an overseas account.

Comelec hit for LDP ruling

By Martin P. Marfil and Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE COMMISSION on Elections was accused yesterday of violating its own resolution when it decided Tuesday to recognize two factions within the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino and allowed each wing to nominate its official candidates.

Lawyer Romulo Makalintal warned that LDP will lose its chance of being declared as a dominant opposition party if it follows the Comelec decision.

The Comelec, by a vote of 5 to 2, decided to recognize two "wings" of the LDP headed by its chair, Sen. Edgardo Angara, and secretary general, Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino.

Angara is supporting Fernando Poe Jr. while Aquino is supporting Sen. Panfilo Lacson's presidential bid.

According to Makalintal, the Comelec decision violated its own Resolution no. 6453 issued on Dec. 10, 2003 which states that "no political party shall be allowed to nominate candidates more than the number of persons required to be voted for in an elective position."

The same resolution also states that if the party cannot decide on who will be their official candidates, they shall be considered independent candidates.

In such cases, Makalintal said the chances of LDP being declared the dominant minority party is the ability of the party to field a complete slate of candidates from the municipal level up to the presidency.

The lawyer said that based on past experience, the Comelec gives this provision the highest weight of 40 points when it tries to determine which would be the dominant parties.

If the LDP loses its dominant minority party status, it will not be entitled to copies of the elections returns and certificates of canvass once elections are held on May 10, 2004.

"Clearly, if Angara and Aquino would be nominating their own respective candidates both under the LDP banner, such nominations had to be denied due course by the Comelec pursuant to its said resolution or its candidates would be considered as independents," Makalintal said in his statement.

"If this happens, it is as if the LDP had never made any nomination and would be considered to have been able to field a complete slate of candidates, thereby, losing its chance to be accredited as a dominant minority or opposition party," he added.

But Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos, in a phone interview last night, said this was not the case as the poll body's decision granted both parties "legal equity," meaning that each wing had the right to nominate one candidate each and this would not violate the provision.

He added that the decision had nothing to do with the question on which party would be declared the dominant minority party as they still have to decide on that issue in another hearing.

The opposition earlier accused Malacañang of pressuring Comelec to recognize both the two LDP contending camps.

But this was denied yesterday by Housing Secretary Mike Defensor, President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign spokesperson.

"They can't (blame) the administration for the shambles and disarray that they are in right now. In the first place, we are not part of the intramurals, the bickerings and the divisions that they themselves have created," Defensor said.

Former Press Secretary Rod Reyes, spokesperson of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino which is backing the candidacy of action star Fernando Poe Jr., said Malacañang's hand was evident in the decision that officially split the LDP.

Top cops behind top drug trafficker

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE COUNTRY'S top drug trafficker who was arrested in Manila more than a week ago was protected by officers of the Philippine National Police and other law enforcement agencies, a senior PNP official confirmed yesterday.

Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay, head of the PNP special task force on illegal drugs, did not identify any of the so-called protectors but maintained that they coddled William Gan whose syndicate accounted for 25 percent of the total supply of shabu in the local market.

Asked if any of the law enforcers belongs to the National Bureau of Investigation or even the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, the official replied: "We will file charges against them once we firm up our cases."

Aglipay said his task force now has the written testimonies of several witnesses and government agents, implicating some PNP officials and other law enforcers in the illegal drug trade.

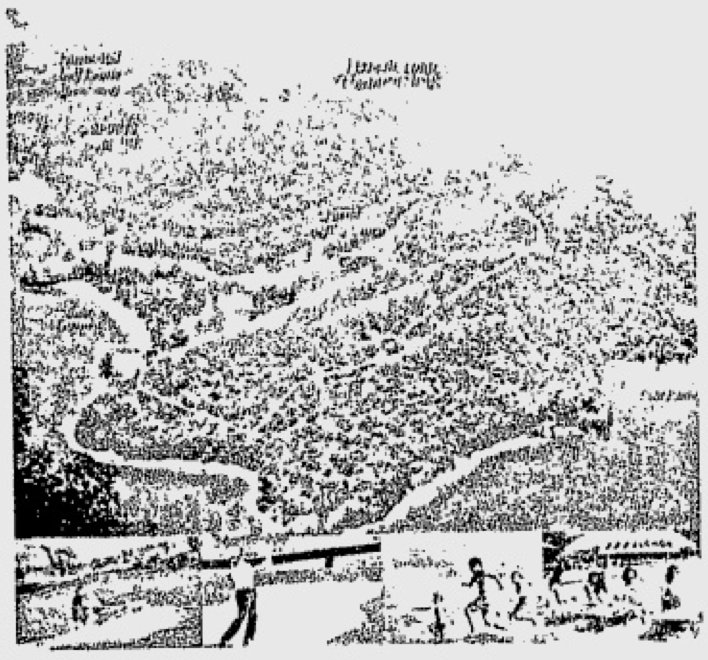
The official said it was anything but surprising for Gan to bribe local authorities into tolerating his drug trafficking, noting that the suspect was earning "billions" before he and his live-in partner were arrested in Binondo, Manila last Dec. 26.

Gan, he said, arrived in Manila from mainland China in 1991 and soon headed the syndicate that operated the shabu factories in Pasig and Valenzuela which were raided by police and PDEA agents late last year.

Authorities are scouring key areas in Visayas and Mindanao in search of warehouses where supplies from the Pasig and Valenzuela factories are believed to be kept.

Aglipay said investigators did not get any help from Gan who remained tight-lipped during interrogation. But the pieces of evidence against the suspected drug lord, he said, were enough to convict him.

"He should be made an example of—a drug trafficker (to be executed) via lethal injection," the official said in Filipino.



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The Firm puts another man in Palace

MALACAÑANG has recruited another senior partner of the "Firm."

Joe Nathan Tenefrancia of Villaraza & Angangco has been tapped to replace lawyer Avelino Cruz Jr., President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief legal counsel.

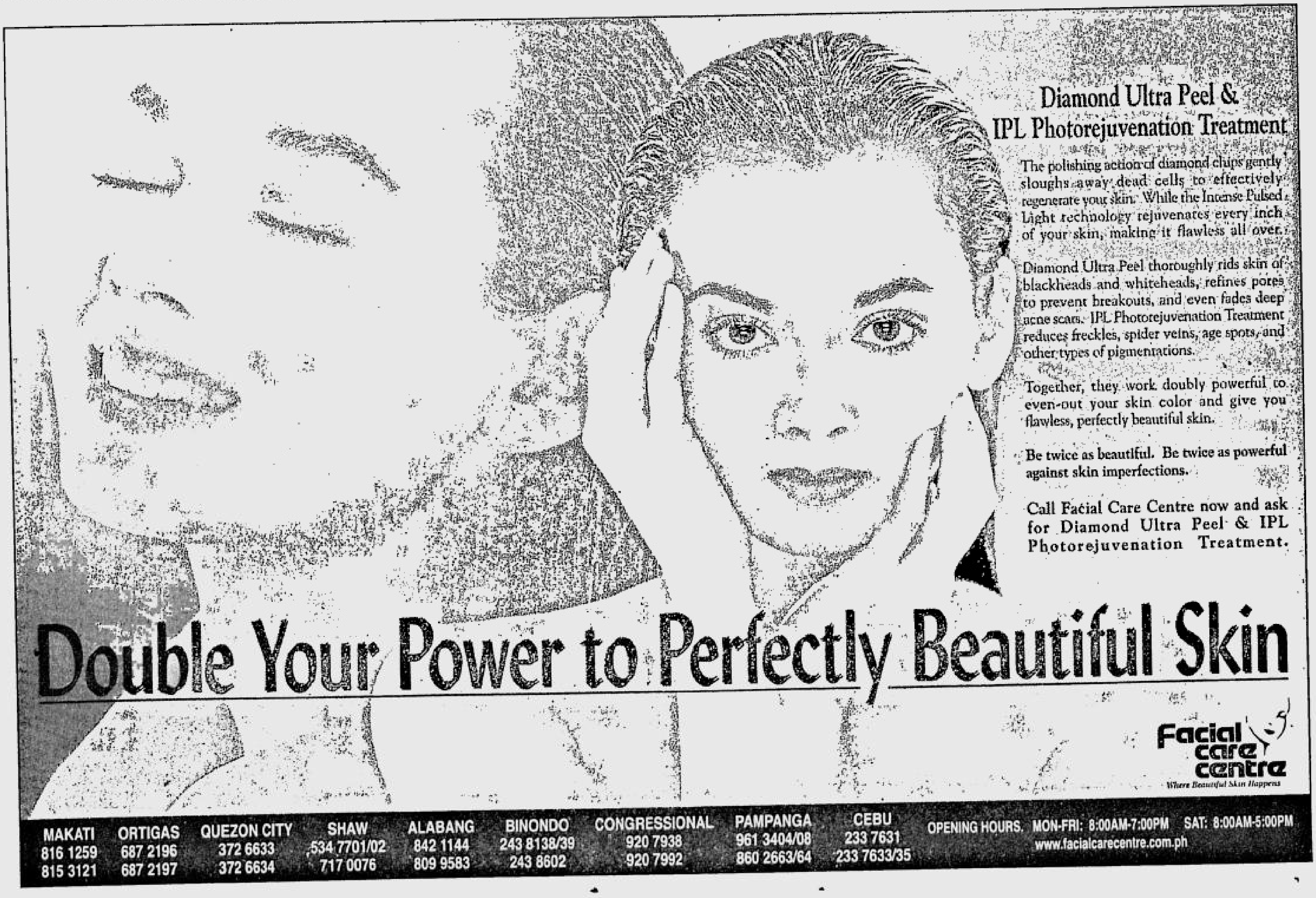
Cruz resigned last week to join the campaign full time. He was a senior partner of the Villaraza & Angangco which had been giving the First Family legal advice long before they came to Malacañang.

The firm had been accused of wheeling-and-dealing in a number of controversial government deals, particularly the nullification of the Philippine International Air Terminal Company's contract to build and manage the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal II. It has vigorously denied this and has sued.

In a briefing, Tenefrancia said his legal advice would be entirely based on facts and laws to dispel suspicions that his former employer has an influence on his office's legal opinions. "I'm a lawyer and lawyers are independent thinkers," Tenefrancia said.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye brushed aside questions on why the President has given preference to lawyers from Villaraza & Angangco. "The new secretary is qualified as an individual lawyer, " said Bunye who could not say if there were lawyers from other law firms considered for the post.

Tenefrancia, 41, has been practicing law for the last 14 years, most of which were with the Villaraza & Angangco. He was a former assistant secretary for legal affairs of the Presidential Management Staff under the term of Secretary Victoria Garchitorena.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HK maid has no SARS; DOH lifts quarantine

From page A1

had atypical pneumonia caused by bacterial infection.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said the antibody test was conclusive although M.D.'s blood samples would still be subjected to the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test "just to double-check."

"We suspected this all along but it was safer to be definite. It's quite conclusive but the PCR (polymerase chain reaction) is going to be done for completeness," Dayrit said at a news conference at the DOH central office in Manila.

Responding well

He said the patient was getting stronger every day. "She is responding well to antibiotics. We think she's going to make it."

Hospital officials said the woman had not run a fever for two days but would stay in care for a week to recover from pneumonia. The woman's husband is no longer in isolation.

Epidemiologists traced 12 more people who had been in contact with the patient, bringing the total number of those exposed to her to 46. But none of them showed any symptoms of SARS.

Dayrit said hospital workers and the woman's friends and family, who were placed in medical isolation, would be allowed to return home. The DOH is discontinuing the contact tracing in the country and in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong authorities have already mandated people who have pneumonia to undergo SARS test to make sure that the illness was not reemerging in the territory, which was one of the hardest hit last year.

EMERGENCY ward of the Laguna Provincial Hospital is sealed by hospital personnel in protective suits for overnight disinfection against possible SARS virus nearly a week after the suspected Filipino SARS victim was treated by doctors. ROMEO GACAD/AFP

First case

On Monday, China confirmed its first case of SARS since an outbreak believed to have originated in its southern Guangdong province in November 2002 subsided last June. It was the first case contracted in recent months anywhere outside a medical laboratory.

SARS, which infected 8,000 people and killed 774 all over the world, was declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization last year. The last recorded transmission of SARS was in July.

No SARS in HK

WHO country representative Jean-Marc Olive praised Philippine authorities, telling reporters the health scare proved that Asian countries were becoming more vigilant over the threat of SARS.

"We've seen the example here where all appropriate steps were taken to minimize secondary transmission of the disease if it had been a SARS case," Olive said.

He earlier said that because there was no SARS in Hong Kong, there was "a very, very remote possibility" that M.D.'s illness was caused by the SARS corona virus.

M.D. first had cough and fever on Dec. 24. She was prescribed antibiotics by her doctors but her condition did not improve so she sought prescription from another doctor. When she continued to have fever, she sought admission at the Laguna provincial hospital.

Laguna hospital

M.D.'s first X-ray, done at the provincial hospital, showed that she had bilateral pneumonia. She and her husband were brought to the RITM Sunday after attendants at the Laguna provincial hospital learned that M.D. had come from Hong Kong.

Her next X-ray at the RITM showed that she had atypical pneumonia. Experts have taken pharyngeal swabs and blood samples for laboratory tests.

RITM Director Remigio Olveda said that M.D. was given third generation antibiotics as soon as she was transferred to the RITM on Jan. 4.

He said that M.D. did not not respond to the first antibiotics given to her by doctors in Laguna because these were first generation antibiotics that could not treat atypical pneumonia.

Good news

Regular pneumonia affects only one part of the lungs and could be easily treated with first-generation antibiotics like penicillin, while atypical pneumonia spreads to different parts of the lungs and responds only to third generation antibiotics.

"The good news about this is that this pneumonia is treatable," Dayrit said. *With reports from AFP and Reuters*

RAMOS

RAMOS-JALASCO

FVR dashes daughter's...

From page A1

Cristy, a former chair of the Philippine Olympics Commission, did not join Roco and the rest of his Alyansa ng Pag-asa ticket at their press conference yesterday morning.

She sent word that she was reconsidering her candidacy because of her father's order, sources said.

Ramos, who is chair emeritus of the ruling Lakas-CMD, supports President Macapagal-Arroyo's electoral bid.

Roco was evasive when asked about Cristy's status as a candidate. "I know she's under tremendous pressure. But whatever happens, she'll campaign for [us]," he said.

Up until the evening of Tuesday, Cristy was determined to run for the Senate.

That afternoon, she joined Roco and the rest of the ticket in discussing campaign details and stayed at the Quezon City headquarters of Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko party until the evening.

Roco said Cristy phoned him that night to inform him of developments.

Back to 7

With Cristy out, Roco is again left with seven senatorial candidates led by former Solicitor General Frank Chavez.

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, who allied with Roco when he bolted the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, has jumped ship and joined the administration ticket.

Cristy said on Nov. 30 that she had her father's permission to run for the Senate under Roco's ticket if she wanted to.

But she did not decide until the last minute, and filed her certificate of candidacy at the Commission on Elections close to the Monday midnight deadline.

In her COC, she said she would run under the Aksyon Demokratiko.

Jay Sonza

Another Alyansa ng Pag-asa senatorial candidate, broadcaster Jay Sonza, said he was also being wooed to join the administration.

Sonza, who is running for public office for the first time, said he had always supported Roco.

The other senatorial candidates on Roco's ticket are former Nueva Ecija Rep. Edno Joson, former Securities and Exchange Commission chair Perfecto Yasay Jr., bowling champion Bong Coo, and lawyers Mel "Batas" Mauricio and Nicanor Gatmaytan Jr., who is blind.

Despite the "defections" from his ticket, Roco said he was not closing the door to candidates from rival camps.

Not defectors

"If there's somebody out there with the same platform as ours, who are we to close our eyes?" he said, adding:

"But if you call them defectors, they're already disqualified."

Roco refused to confirm if he was in talks with Lakas spokesperson Heherson Alvarez, who was dropped from the administration senatorial slate to accommodate opposition senators but who has filed his candidacy as an independent.

Solon reminds GMA that she owes Alvarez

From page A1

Leader Allan Peter Cayetano, Monico Puentevella and Augusto Syjuco—said in a statement that Alvarez should "live a life of sacrifice for the nation's greater good."

"Sonny is a friend from street parliament days. But obviously his personal ambition has blurred his vision. His sour grapes are not good for the country," Nograles said.

Pichay said that as party spokesperson, Alvarez should "exemplify real statesmanship by respecting the coalition's choice of its senatorial slate."

Alvarez has not minced words in criticizing Ms Macapagal, whom he accused of lacking vision and being wishy-washy for compromising over the choice of Santiago, a hardcore supporter of Estrada.

Turn other cheek

Yesterday he vented his ire on some Lakas party mates who were responsible for inviting pro-Estrada allies into the administration ticket. He identified one of them as Gabriel Claudio, the Palace legislative liaison officer.

"These people have strategized too far and are now ruining the party. We are really saddened by this development," Alvarez said.

According to her campaign spokesperson Mike Defensor, Ms Macapagal's reaction was to turn the other cheek.

"The President understands the situation of Senator Alvarez. She understands that the senator is in pain and we hope to patch up things as soon as possible," Defensor said at a press briefing.

Waiting for Miriam

Santiago is taking her time in deciding to defect to the administration camp, but Defensor admitted that Malacañang was indeed waiting for her to agree to take the 12th slot in the slate. He said the decision was expected to come within the week.

"We respect her [Santiago's] decision to bid her time to also give time to President Estrada before she makes the final decision," Defensor said.

Defensor said the delay in filling the 12th slot was not meant to prolong Alvarez's agony.

"This is not a contest between Alvarez and Miriam. In fact, we have another prospective candidate in the person of [Agrarian Reform Secretary Roberto] Obet Pagdanganan," he said.

Disgruntled

Paras, who has just reconciled with Ms Macapagal after shifting support for the aborted presidential candidacy of businessman Eduardo Cojuangco, confirmed that many Lakas members, particularly those identified with former President Fidel V. Ramos, were dissatisfied with the choice of Santiago and Sen. Noli de Castro as vice presidential candidate.

"A lot of congressmen and leaders, most of them identified with FVR called me up saying they will leave Lakas if Miriam, and not Alvarez, would make it. Miriam has been critical of FVR and GMA. Now she wants to be with us. She is criticizing Loren Legarda as a political opportunist but Miriam is worse. She is the real political opportunist," Paras said.

Unlike Santiago, Alvarez has been an asset to the party in terms of competence and loyalty, he said.

Loren, not Noli

Paras said he would still support Ms Macapagal but not De Castro. He said most Lakas members would go for Legarda, a former party mate.

Alvarez himself said his office has been flooded with telephone calls and letters of support from Lakas provincial leaders and members, asking him to stay with the party.

But Paras said he was leaving it to the judgment of Lakas-CMD members whether they agreed with his tirades against the President.

He said that Speaker Jose de Venecia, the Lakas president, had appealed to him not to leave, saying he was the "guiding light" of the party.

Keep faith

"Manong Joe told me to keep faith. He said he did not want me to leave because I'm still one of the biggest stalwarts of the party and that I'm too good and too kind to leave," he said.

Alvarez admitted that he was heartened and softened by De Venecia's words of encouragement.

According to a document outlining the day-to-day tactical grid of Malacañang, some Palace officials wanted Alvarez replaced as party spokesperson because of his tirades against the President.

"His acts and comments show that he is no longer the professional party spokesperson but his own. He should be replaced by Lakas immediately," said the document, a copy of which was furnished the INQUIRER.

Misunderstanding

But it said that Alvarez's "sour grapes" were just a misunderstanding that would be patched up in due time.

It stressed that there were no disagreements in platform or substance, and that "Alvarez was just expressing his opinion and the President understands his feelings, considering that he is a staunch and loyal Lakas official."

The document also said that the Alvarez problem should be resolved soon as the opposition was starting to capitalize on it.

De Venecia said that Alvarez would stay on as party spokesperson and could be given a regular Cabinet appointment, possibly the tourism portfolio which Richard Gordon vacated to run for the Senate. Alvarez is presidential adviser for overseas Filipinos.

Not placated

But Alvarez was far from being placated. Yesterday, he insisted that Ms Macapagal should stop making "anomalous horse-trading" decisions and junk Santiago.

He said that by taking Santiago into her ticket, Ms Macapagal was setting aside the impeachment case and weakening the plunder case against Estrada.

He was also lukewarm to the post of tourism secretary, saying he would have preferred the environment department because of his background. Alvarez had served as environment secretary but had stepped on some sensitive toes, and was replaced with Elisea Gozun. *With a report from Juliet Labog-Javellana*

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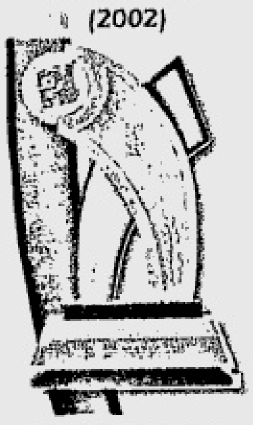

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I convey my warmest greetings to the FIRST QUADRANT PHILIPPINES, INC. as you celebrate two years of commitment to proudly Filipino products.

The efforts to promote Filipino products and provide livelihood are laudable. I enjoin the officers and members of the First Quadrant Philippines, Inc. to march with me toward the path of progress, peace and development. Together, let us build a strong citizenry that is healthy, diligent and full of life. A nation where our people are gainfully employed and their needs are fulfilled.

I wish you all a successful gathering.

Isang ekonomiya na malakas, matatag at maka-Filipino tungo sa Matatag na Republika! Mabuhay!

GMArroyo
H.E. GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
President
Republic of the Philippines

Let me congratulate the officers and members of FIRST QUADRANT PHILIPPINES, INC. on the occasion of your second year anniversary. Let me also thank you for helping many Filipinos achieve success in business enterprises.

I believe that it is the dream of many Filipinos to have a strong national economy. And so it is important to support small industries, which in turn provide employment for thousands of Filipinos. I have heard of the numerous families who have received the benefits of First Quadrant's innovative and generous marketing plan, particularly in the shoe manufacturing companies. First Quadrant's efforts in improving Filipino products to raise it to the level of excellence has in turn encouraged our people to have confidence and pride in our native products.

Each of us has a role to play in contributing to our country's development and ultimate prosperity. So let us all work together and help each other in order to make life better for all Filipinos.

Congratulations again to FIRST QUADRANT PHILIPPINES, INC.

Corazon C. Aquino
H.E. CORAZON C. AQUINO
Former President

My warmest greetings and congratulations to the First Quadrant Philippines on the occasion of its Second Year Anniversary!

With just two years since you started, you have accomplished much not only for the company and its members but for the local industries as well. Amidst the trials and challenges, you have prevailed!

I am extremely proud and privileged to have witnessed the birth and growth of First Quadrant. I have seen how the men and women behind First Quadrant worked hard to find its rightful place in the multi-level marketing industry. Your industry, dedication, and commitment have made First Quadrant the leading multi-level marketing company today -- a well-deserved achievement.

Your vision of providing financial freedom to your members, supporting Filipino industries, showcasing the best of Filipino craftsmanship and artistry are indeed laudable and commendable. Your mission to help and revive the local shoe and manufacturing industries is truly impressive.

May you continue to be inspired of your success and remain steadfast in your commitment to your members and to the local Filipino industries.

Congratulations and I wish you all the best and success in the years ahead!

SEC. MICHAEL T. DEFENSOR
Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council

Let me greet FIRST QUADRANT PHILS., INC. on the occasion of its second year of phenomenal existence capped by exceptional success in multi level marketing and for consistently promoting Marikina-made products such as shoes and bags.

It is no surprise that with the talent of people behind and their enduring commitment to the promotion of Filipino products, your business organization grew at a rate that is the envy of competitors. I am certain that further expansion is a given and that more people would benefit from it, directly and indirectly.

It is my hope that your group will continue pursuing an ever-growing business partnership with the manufacturers and producers of Marikina-made products. This to me is what makes a lot of difference.

Once more, my warm regards and more power!

CONG. DEL R. DE GUZMAN
Representative
Lone District of Marikina

Filipino products need a champion to stay competitive in the market. And it takes a deep sense of purpose and commitment for a champion to pursue such noble task. This is what First Quadrant Philippines, Inc. is all about -- a name that resonates when it comes to advocacy for Filipino products.

It is thus with great pride that I extend my sincerest greetings and best wishes to the First Quadrant Philippines, Inc. on the occasion of its founding anniversary. Truly, the company continues to thrive and provides inspiration to local producers even in the years to come.

Mabuhay po kayo!

Marides Fernando
MA. LOURDES C. FERNANDO
City Mayor, Marikina

Sa Pagtangkilik ng Produktong Pilipino, Pilipino rin ang Aasenso!

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Poe being tutored by UP professors

By Jerry Esplanada

IS FPJ "unreachable" because he's a getting a crash course on governance?

"Poe is getting tutoring from certain University of the Philippines professors," former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said yesterday.

"I approve of that. I have nothing against that. I myself came from UP, but with all the tutoring he's getting it seems his presidency is based on theories, not realities," she observed.

She stressed "a presidency can not be based on theories. That should not be the case."

Hiding from public

Santiago pointed out that "theory is different from reality."

What Santiago disapproves is that Poe has "become unreachable."

"He's been hiding from the public, his followers, even political leaders. And he doesn't give media interviews. You don't see him give interviews or air his views on television, which is a very powerful medium," Santiago told the INQUIRER.

Santiago, who's a topnotch lawyer, finds it "strange for somebody running for president to be unreachable."

Loren a newsreader

Santiago had earlier described as "incompetent" both Poe and her running mate Sen. Loren Legarda.

On Poe, the opposition leader said it was "not personal. It's simply that in my view (entertainers) are not qualified for public office."

Asked why she was questioning Legarda's qualification, Santiago said "she's a newsreader."

It has been "one costly political mistake after another" for the actor, according to Santiago.

Poe "seems to have been given the advice to distance himself from (deposed) President Joseph Estrada," she added.

"It's not only a costly political mistake; it's foolish," Santiago said.

Poe "has been giving people the impression that he doesn't want to be identified with President Erap, who everyone knows is his close friend," Santiago said.

Why Legarda

That, she said, "will not endear him to Edsa people because they object to his inexperience in governance, not to his friendship with President Erap."

"Poe chose Legarda because she is the personal choice of Angara who heads the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino, mesmerized by the idea of a political machinery for himself ...: He chose an established administration figure whose only claim to fame is her immortal screen image as a lachrymose actress crying for selfish joy during the impeachment trial of (then) President Estrada," according to Santiago.

She also suggested that Sen. Edgardo Angara, one of the actor's principal advisers, was the real power behind Poe.

"Clearly, if Poe becomes president, Sen. Angara will be the surrogate president of our country," she added.

Erap picks FPJ over surgery

From page A1

said a US Embassy officer in Manila told her recently that Estrada would be refused a visa if he applied.

"They don't want a domestic problem to be brought there," she said in an interview with radio station dzRH.

The Sandiganbayan has allowed Estrada, who is detained and on trial for corruption and plunder, to fly to the United States this month with police escort for knee surgery but ordered him to return by March 31.

US Embassy spokesperson Ronald J. Post declined comment, citing a US policy not to discuss individual visa cases. He also refused to confirm that an embassy officer met with Estrada's wife. Ejercito said her husband hasn't applied for a visa yet.

Not abandon FPJ

Estrada is detained at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal.

In a statement issued by the PMP, Rodriguez said Estrada was "unsure about leaving at this stage of the election season ... despite the serious threat of permanent paralysis" posed by his arthritis and slipped disc problems.

"President Estrada would like to see this through. He does not want to abandon his best friend at this stage of the political game when FPJ needs his help the most," the statement said.

Estrada earlier expressed confidence that Poe, known by the initials FPJ, would win "with or without me."

Unifying force

Rodriguez said Estrada "wants to be personally hands on in trying to unify the opposition" even as he claimed that the former President had already succeeded in resolving the kinks within the KNP slate.

"Now, he is working toward unifying the KNP and the group led by Sen. Panfilo Lacson and Rep. Butz Aquino," Rodriguez said. "He is the elder statesman and the unifying force of the opposition."

He told reporters that "he (Estrada) will talk to Ping Lacson to unite with FPJ."

The PMP spokesperson said the "Erap factor" would ensure "harmony" and generate support for the opposition coalition.

Estrada was unavailable for comment, but in an interview earlier yesterday, he said he may not be able to leave for the United States as scheduled this month because there were problems with his knee surgeon, Christoper Mow of the Stanford Medical Center.

Expensive doctor's fee

Estrada said the problem arose from Mow's insistence that he be paid $1.25 million for "surgical procedures," excluding professional fees.

"*Hindi ko kaya, masyadong mahal* (I cannot afford it. It's too high)," said the former President, who is accused of amassing P4.1 million from illegal sources like gambling and kickbacks during his two and a half years in office.

"We're still trying to negotiate with the doctor, although I am right now in constant pain. I just try to live with it," he said, noting that negotiations could further prolong his departure for the United States.

Mow was originally set to operate on Estrada on Feb. 4-6.

Critics

Estrada's decision to prolong his stay in the country immediately drew criticisms from private prosecutor Marichu Lambino of the Public Interest Law Center.

"Estrada is making a mockery of the judicial system. Now we know that he is physically strong as any kingmaker and not on the brink of paralysis and certainly not in pain as he claims in his petition to be released to the United States," she said.

Estrada's change of mind came a day after justices of the Sandiganbayan special division admitted in court that they were hurting from the criticism of their Dec. 23 resolution but that they have to do it for "humanitarian and medical reasons."

The justices were accused of allegedly making a highly irregular decision and of "facilitating" Estrada's escape from justice. *With a report from AFP*

Who's who in cast of 'Da King's' inner court

From page A1

Also casting a huge shadow in the Poe campaign is half-brother Conrad Poe, a lesser-known actor.

Total access

The INQUIRER sources inside the Poe camp said that aside from the candidate's wife Susan Roces, Conrad is one of about only two or three individuals who enjoy the full trust and confidence of Poe and have total access to him.

According to the sources, Conrad serves as the only messenger whom Poe would trust with information coming to and from him.

The only information that Poe, a campaign staff member of his said, would believe hook, line and sinker is that one Conrad had already "filtered."

No rumors, please

"FPJ doesn't like to hear rumors and bad things about people. So Conrad verifies the information before it reaches FPJ," said the source.

Conrad, the sources said, is the gatekeeper of the action king when it comes to people who have ideas or other people to recommend to Poe.

Poe's half-brother, the sources added, also plays a lead role in providing security to his famous brother-candidate, tapping the help of the SOS, a group of movie stunt men, as Poe's close-in bodyguards in his so far rare public appearances as a candidate.

Honasan

But in charge of Poe's overall security is Sen. Gregorio Honasan, founder of the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang Makabayan, formerly the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), a group of active and retired military men and officers who broke away from the Marcos rule in the mid-80s.

Followers of Honasan in the RAM were tapped to help secure Poe in his appearances and sorties, sources said. Poe, the source said, enjoys the support of many RAM members.

Another figure who's key but barely visible in the Poe campaign is Yvette Poe, wife of Conrad.

Girl Friday

Sources in the Poe camp described her as Poe's "girl Friday."

Yvette, the sources said, is in full control of the action king's schedule.

Supporters, staff members, leaders of the Poe campaign who wish to meet with the candidate must go through Yvette for clearance.

Some members of the campaign team, including Rod Reyes, have to pass through Yvette first before getting access to the candidate himself.

The only other person who has direct access to Poe is his current spokesman, Sen. Vicente Sotto III, who is by far the only visible major player in the Poe campaign.

Supervisor

Yvette, the sources said, is likely to emerge as the overall supervisor of Poe campaign's finances.

She also recommends which invitations to accept or reject.

But a recent addition in the action king's day-to-day schedule as a candidate was Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta, who gave up a chance for a second term in the Senate.

Oreta coordinates

Oreta and Yvette coordinate in terms of Poe's schedules, which places to visit during the campaign, which invitation from which groups to accept.

Oreta, the sources said, decides on matters like where to hang posters of Poe and the composition and schedule of advance teams for Poe.

POE

Another woman who enjoys the complete trust of Poe, according to the sources, is ex-activist Susan Tagle, who's into the campaign's media affairs.

But although the shooting has started and the main star has appeared on the set, sources in the Poe camp said the campaign is still in disarray and positions, roles and strategies are all "ad hoc."

Angara's men

Although publicly, Sen. Edgardo Angara appears as a key decision-maker in the Poe campaign, sources in the Poe camp said the action king was really "wary" of the senator and his men.

Another source said, however, that the architect of whatever organization or semblance of it that the public sees now in the Poe campaign is Angara.

"He's (Angara) the one running the show as of now," said the source.

The sources said the staff that spends the most time by the side of Poe as candidate is composed mostly of Angara's men like Victor Andres Manhit, former undersecretary of education and longtime political consultant of Angara; Vince Dizon, Angara's chief-of-staff; and Don Juan Bagatsing, Angara's media relations liaison.

Close-in staff

"They serve as a close-in staff," said a source, who added that the presence of Angara's men in the inner circle of the Poe campaign is a sign that Angara enjoys a high degree of trust from Poe.

But some sources said there's a wedge, however thin, still between Poe and Angara.

They said Poe's source of discomfort over Angara is rooted in the actor's genuine dislike of politicians and Angara's failure to stick it out with Estrada at the height of the ousted president's impeachment and eventual ouster.

Name advisers

Santiago appeared to challenge Poe to name his advisers "on economic matters, peace and order, local autonomy, foreign relations and military concerns, among others," she said.

Santiago wondered if Poe "believes in transparency."

Reports indicated that Poe would adopt the economic platform of a group of Makati businessmen, led by the executive council of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industries or PCCI.

Who's who

Aside from PCCI chair Miguel Varela, the group is composed of Manuel Pangilinan, president and chief executive officer of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.; vice chair Placido Mapa of the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.; former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo; and SGV & Co. founder Washington Sycip.

Pardo, however, has denied the economic program was custom-made for the action king.

It would be made available to all presidential candidates, Pardo said.

NDF says GMA allies . . .

From page A1

Candidates for town mayor have to pay a PTC fee of P50,000; those for city mayor, P100,000; those running for a congressional seat, P300,000; and those for governor, P1.5 million.

The military earlier announced the arrest of three suspected communist rebels who were collecting PTC fees from candidates in Surigao del Norte and Agusan del Norte provinces.

Lt. Col. Edito Nisnisan, commander of the Army's 29th Infantry Battalion, said ranking rebel leader Eusebio Dumagat and two of his men, Ely Castro and Carlos Tulib, were arrested last week during a raid in Barangay Bad-as, Claver, Surigao del Norte.

Madlos said the arrests were illegal because the military had no search warrants.

Step up collection

Even so, Madlos said the NDF would step up collection of PTC fees to finance guerrilla operations and other rebel projects.

Senior Supt. Catalino Cuy, police chief of Davao Oriental, said the communist rebels were using its legal fronts to collect PTC fees."

Cuy, however, admitted that the police cannot stop politicians from paying the fees.

Be brave

"But we call on them (politicians) to be brave enough not to give PTC fees because by giving in to the demand, they are helping the rebel group buy more firearms," he said.

In Manila, Armed Forces spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the military was stepping up security in areas "where we believe the candidates will be vulnerable, or (where) there is a big probability that these candidates will be subjected to NPA extortion."

The NPA is the 8,300-member armed wing of the CPP, which is waging a 35-year Maoist insurgency.

Lucero earlier said that the NPA charged each senatorial candidate about a million pesos in the 2001 elections. Gubernatorial and mayoral candidates were charged smaller sums.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Lucero said Quezon province in Southern Tagalog, the entire Bicol region and the eastern section of Mindanao were at risk from increased NPA activity ahead of the vote.

Akbayan condemns

In a press statement, the party-list group Akbayan also condemned the extortion activities of the communist rebels.

"There is no place for extortion and the PTC in a democratic setup like ours," said Akbayan Rep. Etta Rosales, author of House Bill No. 6581 that seeks to makes the collection of PTC fees a criminal offense.

"The purpose of elections is for our people to freely choose their representatives who in turn must govern honestly and competently. If armed groups like the NPA coerce candidates to fork out huge sums in order to participate in the electoral contest, they contribute to corruption and they distort the spirit and intention of democratic politics," Rosales said.

Don't pay

Akbayan's third nominee for the party-list elections, peace advocate Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel, urged candidates not to pay the PTC fees demanded by the rebels.

"We are all aware that our electoral process is imperfect, and so are many of our politicians, but this is not a reason to further undermine it via extortion, cheating, vote-buying and other extra-legal measures," she said. "The evolution of our democracy may be slow, but if we want to change it, we must start with ourselves. It is a contradiction to be joining an election as a progressive and pro-change group while at the same time corrupting it." *Reports from Franklin M. Caliguid, Anthony S. Allada, Dennis Jay C. Santos and Ferdinand O. Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Not so fast, Edsa 3 group warns Loren

From page A1

smiles before reporters to convince us to support her," Mesina said in reference to Legarda's meeting with members of the People's Alliance for Truth and Justice at the Manila Polo Club.

Mesina, who said he was the first to raise objections to Legarda's inclusion in the ticket of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, added: "We cannot make the issues of the masses a laughing matter. The masses have not yet accepted Senator Legarda's candidacy [as vice president]."

According to Mesina, the senator may have a hard time convincing him and his colleagues of her sincerity because they are seriously pursuing a pro-poor agenda, particularly efforts to bring power rates down.

He said that in contrast to her experience with the PATJ led by Arnold Obina, Legarda "may find it difficult to get us to her side."

"We are aware of the fact that this is the only time that the rich and the poor are at equal level. The elections provide the poor that inherent power. That power is not even for sale," he said.

Mesina said Obina, who once served as spokesperson of the PMAP, was removed from the group as a result of his support as early as January 2003 for the presidential ambition of Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

This was in violation of the agreement not to support any political candidate, Mesina said.

Obina subsequently led a "fraction" of the PMAP—the youth and student sector, according to Mesina—to form the PATJ. But the majority of the organizations under the PMAP, supposedly with members numbering about two million, stayed with the group under Ronald Lumbao.

'Biggest crime'

Mesina admitted that the issue of Estrada's ouster had become a bit irrelevant in view of the impending end of the deposed President's supposed term.

But the issue of the power rate increase by the Lopez-owned Manila Electric Co. remained the "biggest crime" committed by the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, of which Legarda is a major player, he said.

Legarda made a name as program host and newsreader of ABS-CBN, also owned by the Lopez family.

Mesina said that while Legarda did not sign in favor of the law granting the power rate increase, she was deemed to have supported it as Senate majority floor leader.

"Talk is cheap," he said. "We want her to show us that she can take drastic, concrete steps to show that she is against the power rate increase. She must show proof that she is serious against it."

Mesina said that the PMAP was not convinced by Legarda's recent press statement assailing high power rates, and that she still had a few days in the Senate to do something about the matter.

No to sandwiches

"We are not after sandwiches but concrete actions to reduce power rates and alleviate the plight of the poor," he said.

He also said that while they were open to negotiations with the senator, they would not be content with "lip service."

Mesina aired the suspicion that certain people "stage-managed" Legarda's meeting with Obina's group to make it appear that she had won the support of the "Edsa Tres" forces.

"They were anticipating that we are going to take a hard-line position," he said, adding that the PATJ could have forged an "internal agreement" with Legarda.

Resentments

Ex-Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago said Estrada loyalists were not solely responsible for the brickbats directed at the choice of Legarda as running mate of actor Fernando Poe Jr.

"Resentments remain," Santiago told the INQUIRER. "Apologies are after the fact... The fact is, the harm has been done. [Legarda's] great sin is on video."

Santiago, who is being wooed by both the administration and opposition camps, said Legarda's "only claim to fame" was "her immortal screen image as a lachrymose actress crying for selfish joy during the impeachment trial of [then] President Estrada."

She also said that while Legarda "has apologized to the Erap loyalists," opposition leaders "don't know how to react."

She added: "I have no problem with her. Her problem is with the Estrada loyalists."

Tatad, too

Ex-Sen. Francisco Tatad is also sticking by his position that Legarda should not be the vice presidential candidate of the KNP.

"I've spoken my piece, but I am willing to submit to the decision of the party," he said. "But that will not change my position on the issue. I've always stood by my principles and I am also ready to suffer the consequences of my beliefs."

Tatad said that he would be "civil and pleasant" in case he bumps into Legarda. "But the truth will have to be told," he added. "I maintain that the illegitimate government should be removed, as well as those who are considered part of that illegitimate government." *With a report from Jerry Esplanada*

Robles; 77

LEGOVIDA Palis Robles of San Pablo City died on Tuesday of cardio-pulmonary arrest and pneumonia after six months in comatose. She was 77.

She was the mother of ABS-CBN Insider news producer Viki Robles.

She left behind children Bing and Lynda, Marian and Fermin Avila, Roel and Cathy, Thess and Ronald Neypes, Nory, Cora, Marian, Lulu, Vily, Nina, Viki and Lee and 20 grandchildren.

Her remains lie at Resurrection 1 chapel at the Arlington memorial Chapels on Araneta Avenue, Quezon City. Interment is tentatively set for Saturday at the South Cemetery in Makati City.

BOTCHED HANDCUFFS DEAL

Ping eyes US court settlement

By Alcuin Papa

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson allegedly wants to enter into a compromise agreement with businesswoman Blanquita Pelaez over a controversial handcuffs deal which turned sour.

Representatives of Lacson recently approached Pelaez with an offer to settle their long standing tiff arising from the aborted handcuffs deal between US company Smith and Wesson and the Philippine National Police which Lacson as then PNP chief had refused to honor, according to sources close to Pelaez camp.

They told the INQUIRER that the offer to Pelaez, then the local representative of Smith and Wesson, was made just after Christmas.

Lacson's representatives assured Pelaez that Lacson would pay her at least $3 million in damages awarded by a US court to her after she sued the senator over the botched deal before a California court.

On top of that, the representatives of the senator also offered an undisclosed amount to Pelaez to "keep quiet" over her case against Lacson.

"For sure, she (Pelaez) will get the award of $3 million by the US court. But there was an offer of something extra for her to keep quiet over the whole thing," the sources said.

But Lacson's camp branded the claim as "absolute canard" from Pelaez herself.

'That's an absolute lie," said Lacson spokesperson Lito Banayo, who said no one was authorized to talk to her.

"Why should we do that? Senator Lacson, as PNP director general, was protecting the interest of the Philippine government. Why should we settle with her?" Banayo said.

Banayo even dared Pelaez to run all the way to the International Court of Justice even as he claimed that a US court had ruled out her $3-million claim for damages. He did not elaborate on this.

Losing by default

The conflict between Lacson and Pelaez arose after the senator, then newly-installed as PNP chief, refused to acknowledge the delivery of more than 40,000 pairs of handcuffs by Smith and Wesson.

After her attempts to negotiate the consummation of the deal failed, Pelaez filed the case before a court in Alameda, California on Dec. 14, 2001.

Last January 2003, Judge Julie Conger awarded more than $3 million in punitive damages to Pelaez. Lacson lost the case by default.

Lacson's camp contested the decision before the Alameda court of John Richmond but Lacson lost again by default.

On Oct. 23, 2000, Lacson again filed an appeal before the court of Judge Roland Sabrow, also of Alameda, but the judge deemed the case "uncontested" and Lacson lost again by default. Sabrow also awarded Pelaez $31,297 for her original claim.

In the case's last hearing last Dec. 29, Sabrow denied Lacson's appeal to dismiss the case and the earlier judgments for lack of jurisdiction.

C. Mindanao facing crisis in education

By Philip C. Tubeza

CENTRAL Mindanao is not just reeling from secessionist conflict, it is also facing a crisis in public education. This is one of the findings of a special study conducted by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

To help solve the education crisis in the South, particularly in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, the US Agency for International Development and the PBSP yesterday launched the Education Awareness Support Effort (Ease).

A PBSP study showed that only 61 percent of ARMM population of 10-years-old and above are functionally literate. This is below the 75 percent functional literacy rate for Mindanao, lower than Luzon's literacy rate of 86 percent and the Visayas' rate of 81 percent.

At the high school level, only 39 percent of teenagers in ARMM aged 13 to 16 are actually enrolled. The dropout rate in ARMM is 20 percent, the highest in Mindanao.

Ease, which is funded by Usaid under its Growth with Equity in Mindanao (GEM) Program, aims to increase public awareness about the education crisis in ARMM and mobilize the private sector to participate in solving the problem. It is jointly managed by Usaid, the ARMM government, and the Mindanao Economic Development Council. PBSP would provide technical assistance in Ease's implementation.

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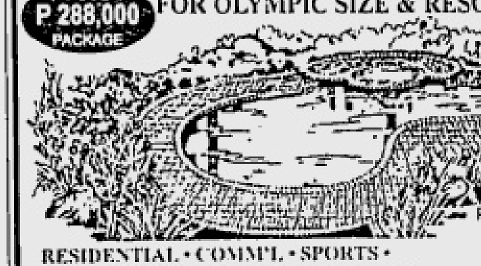

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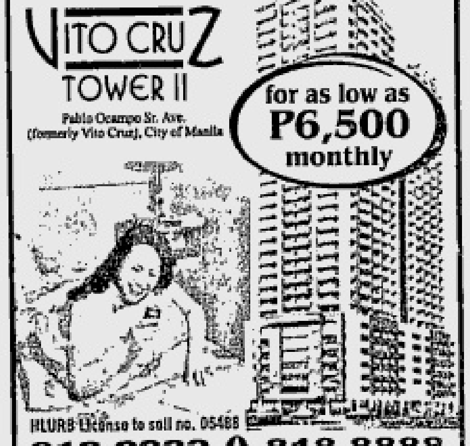

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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

ANTI-SARS CAMPAIGN

After killing cats, China targets rats

GUANGZHOU, China—Rats are the latest target in the dramatic anti-SARS campaign in China, where as many 10,000 civet cats are being slaughtered on fears that some animals might be spreading the disease to humans.

Officials said Wednesday that the entire rat population of the southern city of Guangzhou must be wiped out.

The announcement came as a spokesperson for the Guangzhou health bureau denied a Hong Kong news report that a waitress in a restaurant serving wild game had tested positive for SARS antibodies, indicating she might have been exposed to the virus.

Rat extermination begins Saturday, said the spokesperson, who refused to give his name. That is the government's deadline for killing thousands of civets and related animals seized from wildlife markets in Guangzhou and surrounding Guangdong province.

"Guangzhou's carpet extermination of rats," said a headline in the newspaper Information Daily. It said "the whole city united will go about killing rats, not leaving out one household."

Guangzhou is the site of China's first confirmed SARS case this season, a 32-year-old television producer. The order to kill civets came after genetic tests showed a possible link between the patient and a virus found in the animals. Experts also are investigating whether the man might have been exposed to the virus by rats in his apartment building.

Since late Monday, health authorities in Guangdong have been drowning, electrocuting and incinerating hundreds of civets—a local delicacy—and related animals seized from wildlife markets. The government says the order affects some 10,000 civets.

The government says the television producer has recovered and should leave the hospital on Thursday. He was hospitalized on Dec. 20.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome is believed to have emerged in Guangdong in November 2002, possibly jumping from animals to humans. It killed 58 people in the province and a total of 774 worldwide—mostly in Asia—before subsiding in June.

The South China Morning Post newspaper of Hong Kong said civets were found at Guangzhou waitress' restaurant. Citing unnamed sources, the newspaper said tests on her showed antibodies to the SARS virus.

"That's not so," said the health bureau spokesperson. "We've already formally said so."

China's government on Monday denied news reports that the woman, who is hospitalized with pneumonia and a fever, had SARS.

Roy Wadia, a World Health Organization spokesperson in Beijing, said the agency was looking into reports about the waitress but couldn't confirm whether she had SARS antibodies.

Wadia noted that WHO experts searching for the possible source of the confirmed Guangzhou patient's infection were examining rats from his apartment building. Earlier Chinese news reports said the man had handled a dead rat with chopsticks.

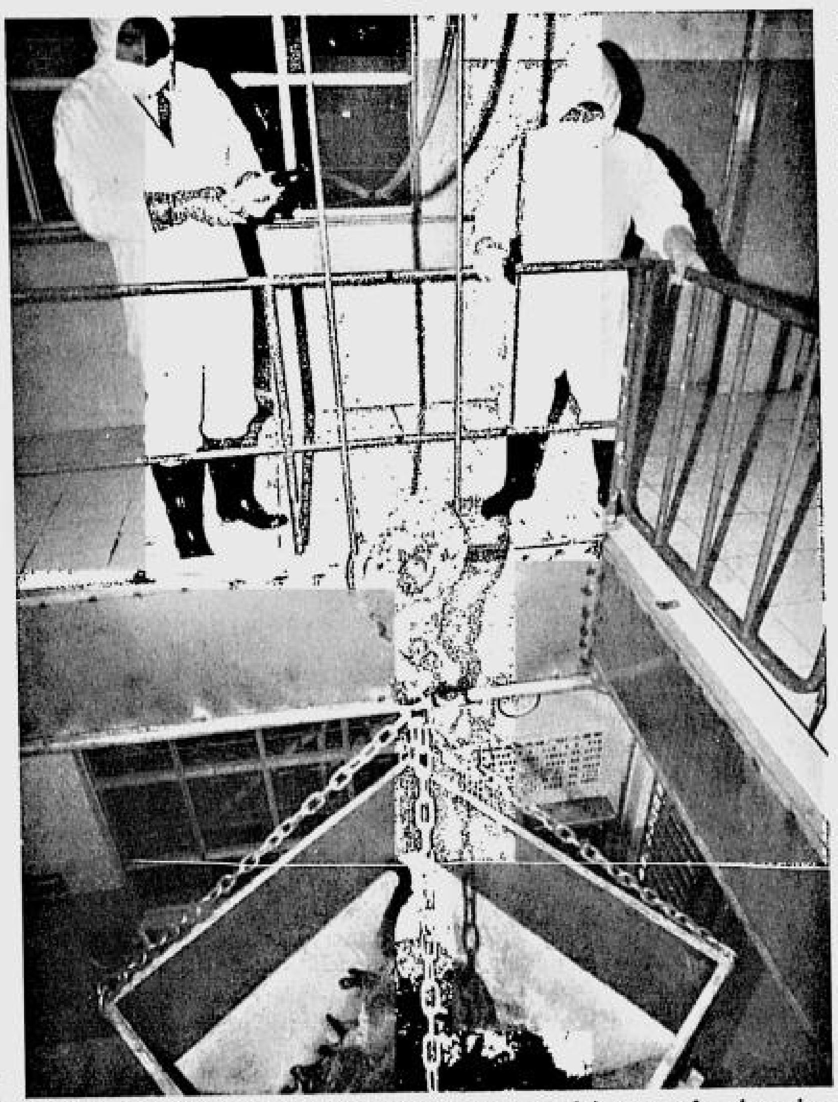
"But as to any confirmed links, there are none yet," Wadia said.

Guangzhou holds an annual rat-killing drive, the health bureau spokesperson said, but this year, "the second goal is to prevent the spread of SARS."

The spokesperson said he didn't know how many rats the city had or how many had been killed in previous years.

Newspapers warned the public to take precautions against infection.

"While killing rats, you must wear disinfected gloves," said the newspaper Guangzhou Daily. An illustration showed a gloved man plunging a cage full of rats into a bucket of water. AP



HEALTH workers prepare to incinerate the carcasses of civet cats after drowning them in chemical disinfectant in Guangzhou. REUTERS

Tung vows reforms but only draws more flak

HONG KONG—A government task force will study possible political reforms for Hong Kong, including direct elections after 2007, but changes could be made only after consultations with China, the territory's Beijing-backed leader, Tung Chee-hwa, said Wednesday.

The pledge, made in an annual policy address, came six months after 500,000 people protested against a proposed anti-subversion law, throwing Tung's government into crisis. He was forced to withdraw the bill and pledged to listen more carefully to the public.

"The July 1 rally clearly conveyed people's dissatisfaction with, and expectations of, the government," Tung said, adding that his administration will take steps to better gauge the pulse of the general public.

On New Year's Day, tens of thousands of pro-democracy protesters marched again through the streets of the former British colony, demanding faster reforms.

Tung said the task force, to be headed by Hong Kong's No. 2 official, Chief Secretary for Administration Donald Tsang, will consult Beijing on possible direct elections of Hong Kong's chief executive and the legislature after 2007.

"We definitely need to understand the full implications of these important issues, before making appropriate arrangements for the review of constitutional development," Tung said.

But Tung's address quickly drew criticism from opposition lawmakers and activists, who said he failed to respond to public demands for democratic reforms.

"He is just delaying the reforms by setting up a task force and refusing to start public consultations immediately," said independent political commentator Andy Ho.

Despite louder calls for full democracy in recent months, the pace of change is ultimately up to China, which maintains control over the territory despite a hands-off governing arrangement that has allowed Western-style freedoms since the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. AP

Suspect admits killing Swedish foreign minister

STOCKHOLM—The man suspected by police of fatally stabbing Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh last year confessed to the crime, his lawyer said Wednesday, but gave no reason for attacking her.

Peter Althin said Mijailo Mijailovic, 25, confessed to the crime on Tuesday while he was being interrogated by police and investigators.

Chief prosecutor Agneta Blidberg said that the confession would likely result in a swifter trial and increased the likelihood of a guilty verdict.

Mijailovic has been in custody since Sept. 24, two weeks after the 46-year-old Lindh was stabbed several times in the stomach in a Stockholm department store while shopping with a friend. Doctors worked for several hours to save Lindh, but she died the morning of Sept. 11, plunging the country into mourning.

Lead investigator Leif Jennekvist said the results of the preliminary investigation had been enough to charge Mijailovic.

"But of course it is very important that he himself understands and confesses," he said.

Blidberg said that Mijailovic could be charged with Lindh's murder as early as Jan. 12 and a trial could start a week later, or Jan. 19. The start time, however, depends on whether Mijailovic will undergo a psychiatric screening ahead of the trial.

"But that's up to the court to decide," she said.

Althin had no immediate comment about the charges or trial. Neither did he say why Mijailovic, a Swede of Yugoslav origin with previous convictions for assault, illegal weapons possession and making death threats, confessed to the killing.

Mijailovic likely faces life in prison. Sweden, like other European countries, doesn't have capital punishment.

Blidberg has said that DNA traces found on the knife used to stab Lindh and on Mijailovic's clothes matches his own, adding that the evidence against the suspect is good.

Lindh, touted as a future prime minister of the Scandinavian country of 9 million, was popular with many Swedes. Her death shocked the country and left it numb just days ahead of a national referendum on whether to adopt the euro, which failed.

Police have maintained her death was not the result of her strong pro-euro stance, calling it merely a random act of violence.

The trial against Mijailovic is expected to dominate Scandinavian media, particularly in Sweden, which is still haunted by the unsolved killing of Prime Minister Olof Palme in 1986. AP

WORLDBRIEFS

US to free 500 Iraq prisoners

BAGHDAD—Iraq's US-led administration will release 506 prisoners from detention camps in a show of good will, while simultaneously offering bounties for 30 more Iraqis wanted in the anti-American insurgency, officials said. Coalition officials said the releases—out of some 12,800 detainees—are also aimed at fostering intelligence tips, which they said have surged in the three weeks since the capture of Saddam Hussein. AP

Republican firm bags Iraq contract

WASHINGTON—Bush administration officials say politics had nothing to do with a decision to award a second contract worth $1.8 billion to rebuild Iraq to Bechtel, the giant construction company known for its close ties to Republican officials, and its partner, Parsons Corp. In announcing the new contract on Tuesday, the US Agency for International Development said that Bechtel and Parsons, both based in California, came up with the best proposal at the lowest price when competing for bids against two other companies. "This contract and selection was run completely by USAID," said Tim Beans, the agency's procurement director. "There was no influence whatsoever either direct or indirect on the contract process. I was never contacted at any point by anyone on this procurement and if I had been I would have reported it to the inspector general." AP

3 Palestinian militants killed

JERUSALEM—Israeli soldiers patrolling West Bank towns as part of a sweep aimed at rounding up Palestinian militants shot and killed three of the militants Wednesday, according to the army and witnesses. The Army has been conducting stepped up operations against militants throughout the northern West Bank since mid-December, focusing heavily on the city of Nablus. Soldiers have killed 14 Palestinians in the city over the past three weeks. AP

Doctors ordered to examine Suharto

JAKARTA—Indonesian prosecutors on Wednesday ordered physicians to re-examine ailing ex-President Suharto to see if he was fit enough to stand trial on charges of corruption during his 32-year reign. Sudhono Iswahyudi, the junior attorney general for special crimes, said the decision was made after reports from the public indicated that Suharto appeared fit enough to stand trial. AP

Haiti faces hunger crisis

CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti—Ravaged by poverty and rising political unrest, Haiti is facing another looming crisis as aid agencies struggle to feed the nation's malnourished with half the food they were expecting, the World Food Program said. The UN agency, with the help of Oxfam and Caritas, is trying to deliver emergency aid to northern villages where nearly 25,000 people have been left without food due to recent floods. To feed the neediest, food is being borrowed from school feeding programs. "These people are barely surviving," Guy Gauvreau, the World Food Program's officer in Haiti, said Tuesday. "This is a silent crisis but unfortunately donor countries have not made Haiti a priority." AP

2 women claim $162-million jackpot

CLEVELAND—Two women have made separate claims on a $162 million lottery jackpot. One gets the money and the other hired a lawyer and filed suit, contending the winnings are rightfully hers.

Rebecca Jemison, 34, was certified Tuesday as the winner of the Dec. 30 drawing for the Mega Millions multi-state lottery, getting a lump-sum payment of $67.2 million after taxes. She offered advice to bettors.

"Believe. You never know what's going to happen," she said.

The other claim, discounted by the lottery, was made in a police report filed by Elecia Battle, 40, who said she dropped her purse as she left a convenience store in suburban South Euclid after buying the ticket for the 11-state drawing.

As Jemison smiled for television cameras at the offices of the Ohio Lottery, Battle asked a court to block the lottery from paying Jemison.

Battle said she only realized after the drawing that the ticket was missing, and told police she picked the numbers based on family birthdays and ages.

"My ticket was lost. I do recall all the numbers. They are all somehow family-related. No one can tell me what I did and did not play. I did it honestly and I have no doubt," Battle said at the office of her attorney, Sheldon Starke.

However, police in South Euclid feel Jemison's winning ticket "obviously draws into question the integrity of Elecia Battle's report," said Lt. Kevin Nietert.

Police, who originally believed Battle, are now investigating whether she lied in a police report—a misdemeanor punishable by 30 days to six months in jail.

Jemison said Battle's claim prompted her to quit stalling and submit her ticket.

"I was angry at first, but not worried at all," Jemison said. "I knew what I possessed."

Dennis G. Kennedy, director of the Ohio Lottery, said the lottery was confident Jemison had bought the ticket, not found it.

Jemison provided another lottery ticket bought at the same time and place, and had a ticket from a previous drawing showing she had played the same numbers before, Kennedy said. AP

Coroner says Di was not pregnant

LONDON—Princess Diana was not pregnant when she died, a former royal coroner says, apparently ruling out one of the rumors which has swirled around her death in a car crash six years ago.

Dr. John Burton, who was the royal coroner at the time, said he was present at a post-mortem examination after her body was returned from Paris, The Times newspaper reported in Wednesday's editions.

"I was actually present when she was examined. She wasn't pregnant. I know she wasn't pregnant," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Burton spoke on the same day that the present royal coroner, Michael Burgess, opened formal inquests into the deaths of Diana, 36, and her boyfriend, Dodi Fayed, 42. They died when their chauffeur-driven car crashed in an underpass in Paris on Aug. 31, 1997.

A French judge laid responsibility for the crash on the driver, Henri Paul, who was found to have been intoxicated and driving at high speed. He was also killed.

Burgess announced Tuesday that he had asked police to look into theories that the princess was the victim of a conspiracy, variously attributed to the royal family and intelligence agencies.

"I'm aware that there is speculation that these deaths were not the result of a sad but relatively straightforward road traffic accident in Paris," Burgess said.

"I have asked the Metropolitan Police Commissioner (Sir John Stevens) to make inquiries. The results of these inquiries will help me to decide whether such matters will fall within the scope of the investigation carried out at the inquests," he said.

Fayed's father, Mohammed Al Fayed, has claimed that Diana may have been pregnant when she died. He has also accused Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, of masterminding a conspiracy. AP

THE LATE Princess Diana is once more in the news after a British tabloid named her former husband Prince Charles as the person she suspected of plotting to kill her. REUTERS

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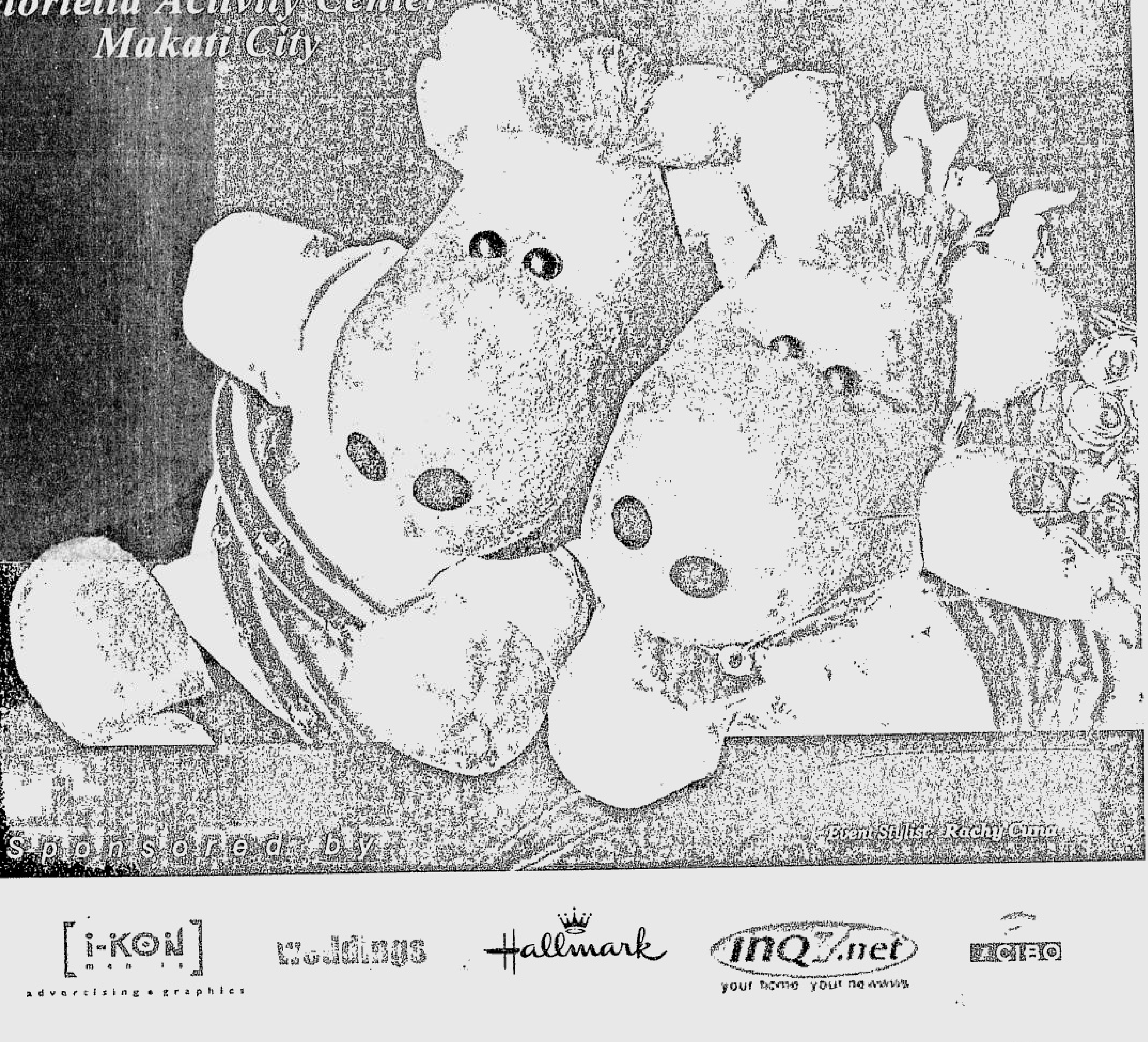

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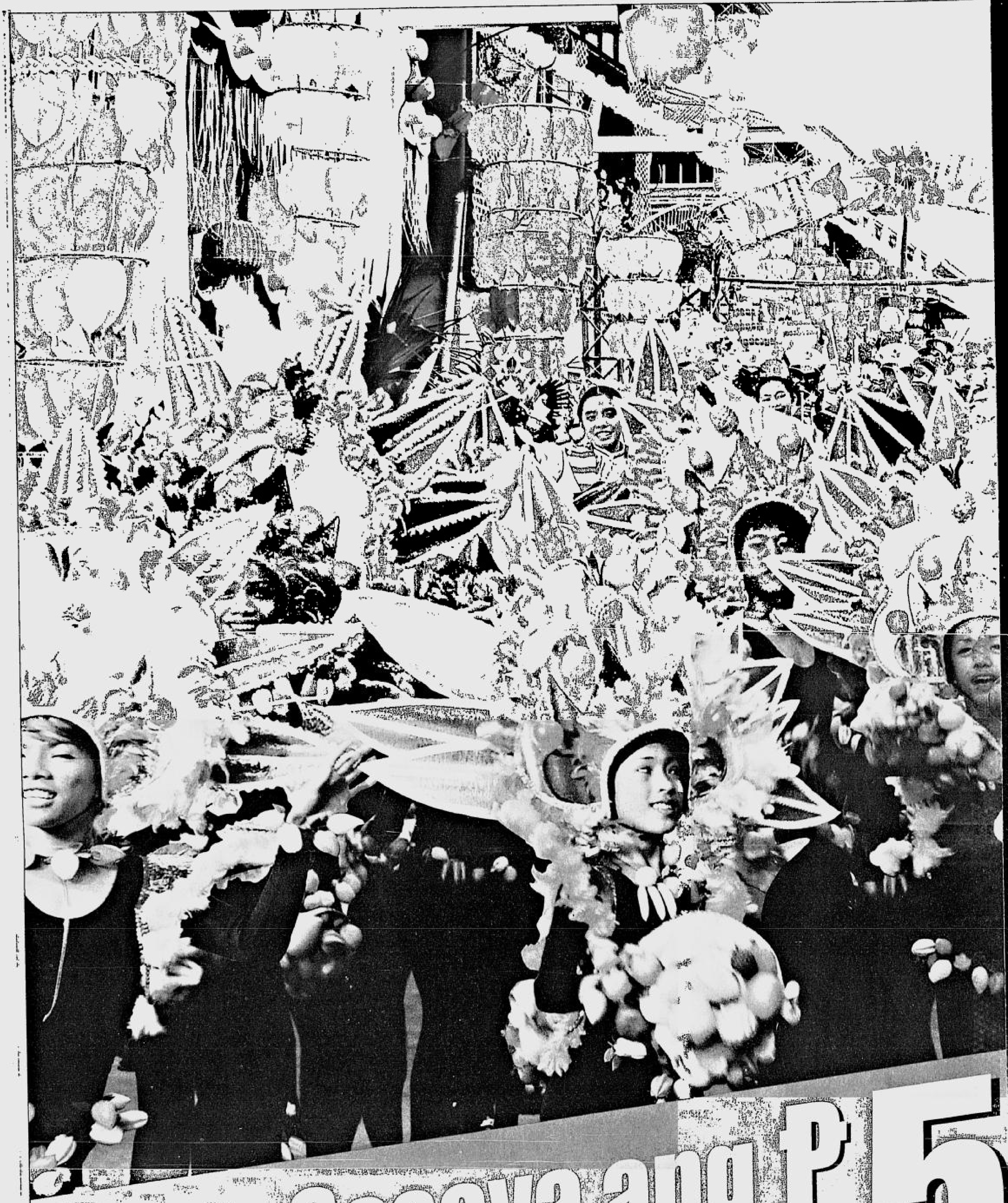

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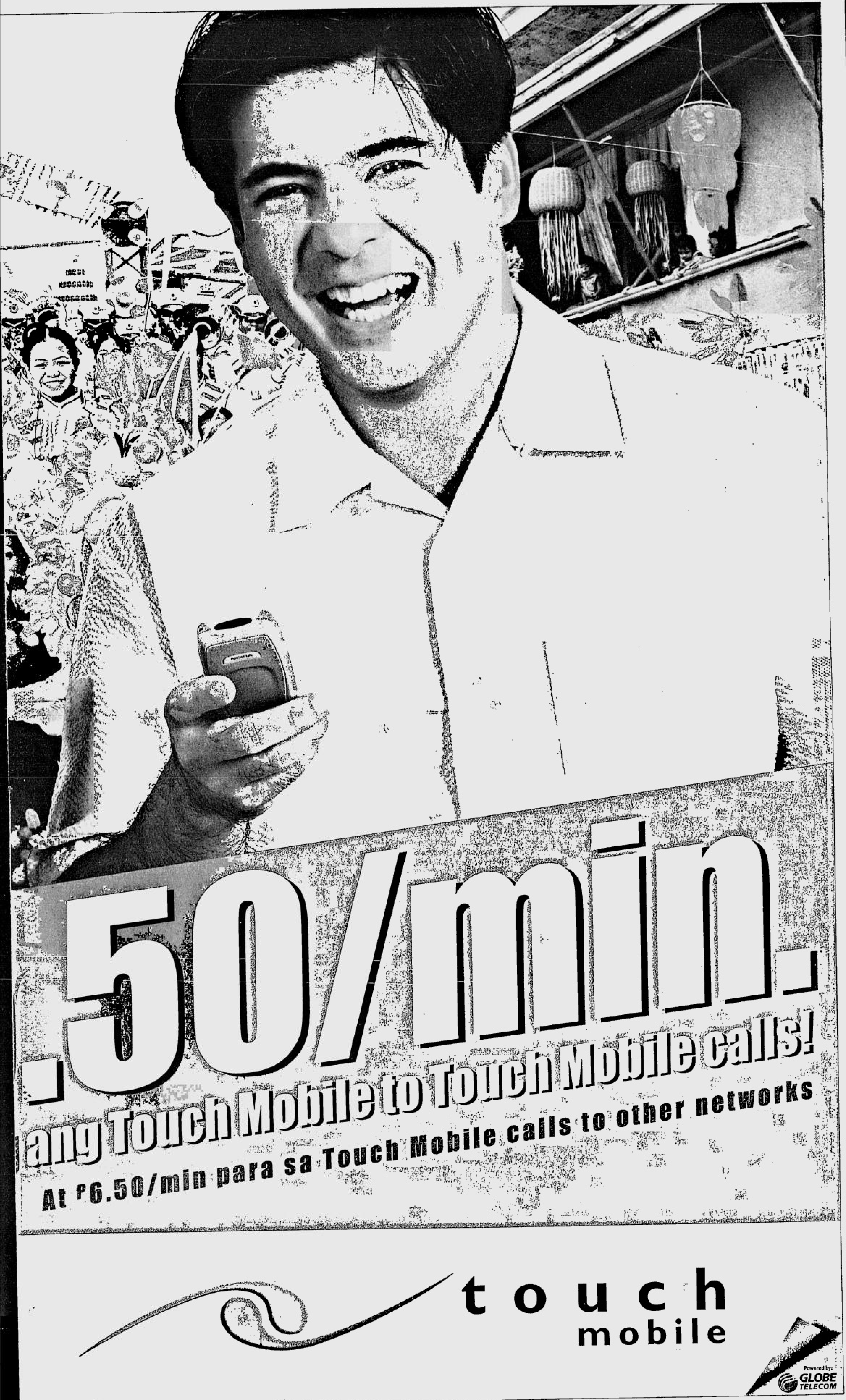
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EDITORIALS

Charming

AND if politics is the art of the possible, then Sen. Loren Legarda is an artist. Apparently a charming one, too, as evidenced by her having won over Joseph Estrada's boys who have been, if nothing else, fierce in their expressions of loyalty to their fallen idol and of contempt toward his perceived enemies. The reportage on her Tuesday meeting with members of the People's Alliance for Truth and Justice—complete with down-home details of the menu choices that each camp made and spiced by photographs of body language (Legarda laughing coyly behind a covered mouth with the PATJ's Arnold Obina, or demurely smiling in the obligatory linked-arms pose with her new co-contenders, the likes of Juan Ponce Enrile et al.)—suggested a skillful performance. And to think that she is relatively new in the game well known by contortionists. Imagine how she will be as a grizzled veteran.

In trying to explain to Estrada's boys her turnabout from the "crying lady" at the then president's impeachment trial, Legarda took the personal tack: the tears she shed were a result of an "outburst of emotions," she being, she said, "not a robot." There was nothing else from which to derive understanding of her new stance. There was nothing to explain why, in supposed pursuit of "the ideals of Edsa II," she switched to the very camp that the same mass action toppled from power.

Memory cannot be so treacherous as to allow the crucial scene to disintegrate so quickly: Legarda weeping as she embraced Aquilino Pimentel Jr., who had just announced that he was quitting his post as Senate president in protest over the defeat of the vote to open the second envelope containing records of the "Jose Velarde" account. (Pimentel himself, he who has said that Legarda should apologize for her role at Estrada's impeachment trial, ought to remember. This was what he said then, to the loud applause of the gallery: "I vote to open the second envelope. I vote to do so because that is the only way to determine whether or not the contents of the envelope are relevant or material to the case at bar. Because of this development, Mr. Chief Justice, I realize that the 'nays' have it. And therefore, I resign my presidency of the Senate as soon as my successor is elected.")

On TV (unless, of course, she was even then an excellent actress adept at producing tears), Legarda's weeping appeared real, indicating an overwhelming frustration at the power wielded, not by superior legal arguments, but by superior voting numbers. (This same frustration, not particularly the call of any personage, whether of the Church or of "civil society," was what initially moved masses of people to take to the streets in the aftermath of the defeat of the "aye" vote.)

And now the woman is saying that she was merely being "emotional" then, which is actually saying that only emotion, and not a profound conviction, ruled her behavior as senator-judge at the historic trial.

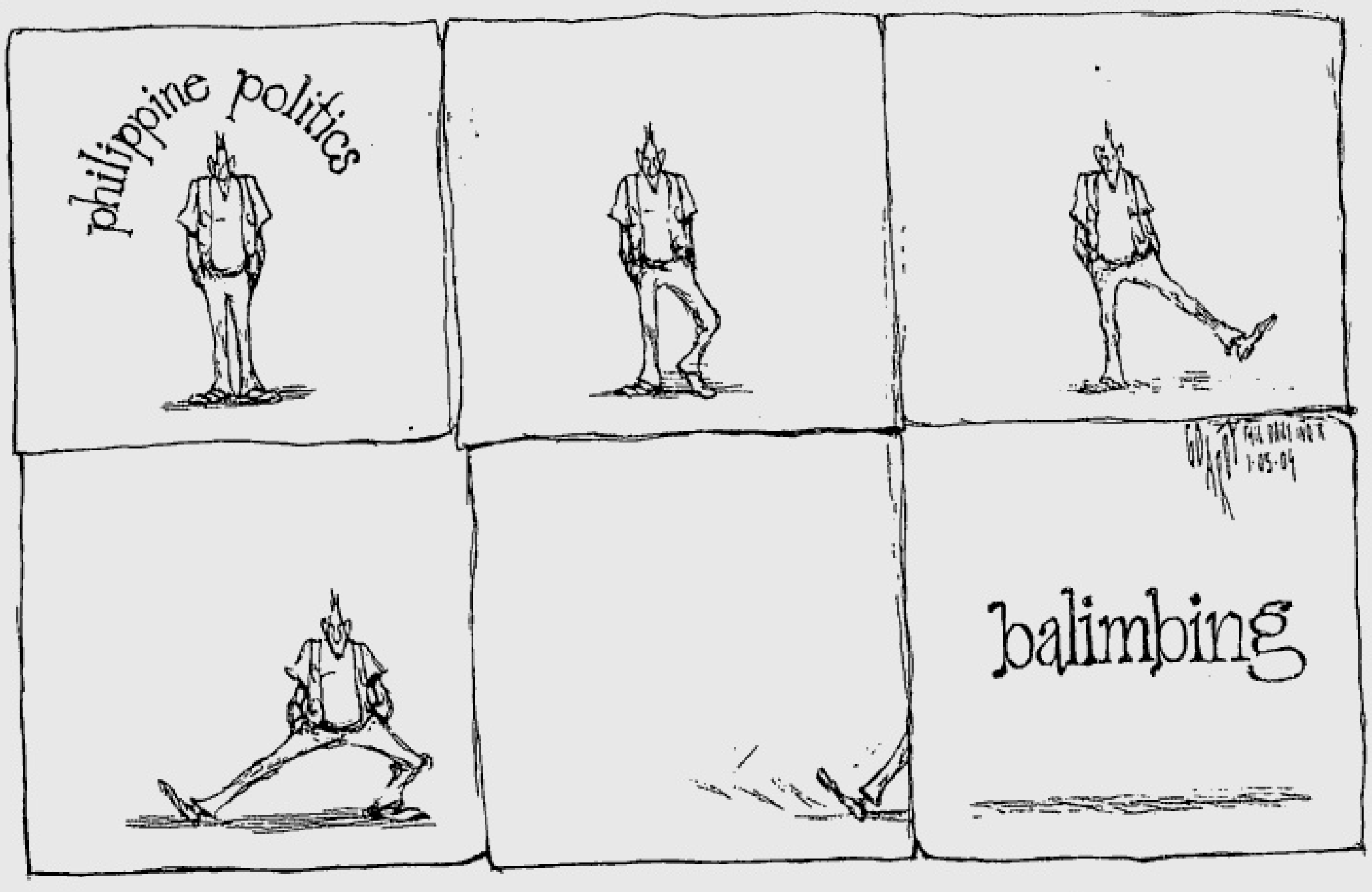
But it looks like Legarda has yet to be done with the charm act. The attentive observer is correct to wonder why it was Obina of the PATJ, and not the canny Ronald Lumbao of the People's Movement Against Poverty, getting cozy with Legarda in the photo op at the Manila Polo Club. Politics being the art of the possible, it turns out there's more of Estrada's boys to get into bed with. In a manner of speaking, of course.

Frightening

IF there's one thing made supremely obvious by the current contortions in the political scene, it's the worn adage that to make a revolution, you have to break eggs. Two "people-power revolutions" have come and gone—replete with high emotion but with no eggs broken—and there's nothing much to show except for the keener edge of hunger in the streets and, in the manner of a circus act, the continuing juggling of the names and faces that, by rights, should have been thrown out of the loop and into oblivion a long time ago.

This is the state of things as the silly season lurches on to even more heated dimensions: the depredations of the dictatorship festering even as Ferdinand Marcos' heirs prance about in fine fettle; the Estrada regime, abbreviated and now on its last legs, promising to morph into a new, more corpulent creature; the incumbent *apparat* pulling out all the stops for a last-ditch effort to retain power.

A challenging, but frightening, scenario even for alliances built on hope.



Like flies jumping from manure to rotting carcass

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

CONVINCING proof that a parliamentary system will not work for us can be seen right now everywhere in the political scene. The strength of a parliamentary system lies in the political parties. The government is run by the majority party. The parties stand for and espouse definite ideologies and platforms. Because of this, politicians don't change parties; they stick with them through thick and thin.

As we can see now, the opposite is exactly what Filipino politicians like to do. They change parties as easily and frequently as they change underwear in the morning. Opportunity, not loyalty or ideology, is what guides the Filipino politician. We can be sure that members of parliament of all political stripes will jump to the majority party to share in the spoils of victory. There will be no checks and balances. But they will jump from party to party not like grasshoppers on a summer day or butterflies flitting beautifully from flower to flower, but like tsetse flies buzzing from manure to rotting garbage to putrefying carcass. The Philippines will be one big mound of a foul-smelling and decaying society.

Just look at the senatorial hopefuls. They are switching parties so fast that you don't know what party each politician will be affiliated with when you wake up the next morning. Within a few days, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon has affiliated with three different and opposing political parties. He left the LDP to be a senatorial candidate in Raul Roco's ticket but after being proclaimed, he jumped again to the administration ticket.

Former Sen. Ernesto Maceda is the "chair emeritus" of the Nationalist People's Coalition, which is supporting the administration ticket, but he is now a senatorial candidate of the opposition KNP. Former Sen. Orly Mercado was the defense secretary of Erap but he is now a senatorial candidate in the anti-Erap administration ticket.

The coming election is clearly a fight between the pro-Erap and pro-GMA forces. But look at the candidates of the two camps. Politicians who were staunch defenders of Erap during the impeachment trial are now in the ticket of GMA, the pretender who ousted Erap and grabbed Malacañang. Opposition Senators Rodolfo Biazon and John Osmeña are now firmly in the GMA senatorial slate and former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago is making noises that she would join it, too.

On the other side, a senator who participated actively in Erap's impeachment trial, Loren Legarda, is now the vice-presidential candidate of Erap's pal and *kumpare*, Fernando Poe Jr. A politician who was one of the authors of the impeachment complaint, ex-Sen. Ernesto Herrera, is now a senatorial candidate in the pro-Erap ticket. And a leader of Sen. Ping Lacson in his fight against FPJ for the LDP presidential nomination is also a senatorial candidate in the FPJ ticket. This, in spite of Rep. Carlos Padilla's announcement that he would campaign for Lacson, not FPJ.

Contradictions, contradictions. Santiago, that feisty lady(?), bolted the pro-Erap ticket of FPJ because she claimed she could not stand campaigning with Legarda who was one of those who "persecuted" Erap. Yet she is willing to, campaign with GMA herself, the mastermind in the ouster and the current prosecution and persecution of Erap.

Early on, Santiago endorsed FPJ and even volunteered to be his debater, but when Da King chose Legarda as his running mate and not her, she unleashed a double-barreled attack against FPJ. At the wake of her son, a grieving Santiago vowed that she was through with politics, that she would never run for public office again. But now she is not just running but bitterly fighting for the second highest post in the land. Of course, she can easily explain these somersaults. The first time she did it, she quipped nonchalantly: "I lied." She can just as easily say that she also lied during her son's wake. That probably explains why she would feel more at ease campaigning with GMA: They're birds of a feather.

With so many migratory birds in Philippine skies, how can we have a successful parliamentary government, especially if the likely prime minister is Speaker Jose de Venecia or Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo or Danding Cojuangco or even Fidel V. Ramos?

JDV is vigorously pushing a parliamentary system because that is the only way he can be chief executive of the nation. This is his last hurrah. GMA is now agreeable to it probably because she senses that she could lose the presidency. But she could easily win as member of parliament in her Pampanga district and once there, she may be able to nail the prime ministership. With his reputed wealth, Cojuangco will surely attract flies, er, members of parliament, and buy the premiership. And Ramos, barred by the Constitution from running for another presidential term can, under a parliamentary system, run for a seat in parliament and become prime minister.

Do we want any one of them to be our chief executive? Do we want to give more power to the present politicians, the same congressmen, to suck more of our blood?

If you agree to that, you don't have to do anything. You can behave like a doomed animal being led to the slaughterhouse. But if you don't agree, you must actively help prevent a shift to a parliamentary government.

What administration? What opposition?

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

HEHERSON Alvarez, Lakas-CMD spokesperson, says Lakas and civil society groups are "very disturbed" by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's "overwhelmingly pragmatic" approach to the elections. Her senatorial slate threatens "the core values of the coalition."

"While we are capable of compromise, there is a point when a compromise becomes overwhelming," said Alvarez, referring to the inclusion of Miriam Santiago, John Osmeña and Orly Mercado among her choices.

Of course, Alvarez's complaint is not entirely without a personal element. He's been left out despite being a stalwart of Lakas. And of course, Alvarez has been hounded since the days of Cory Aquino with not being up and up with the people's money. GMA did relieve him of his post as DENR chief early in her rule on that charge. But Alvarez has also always been consistent in his political beliefs. He was a pillar of Edsa I and Edsa II, and neither between nor afterward did he capitulate to the "Dark Side," if you might call it that. He hasn't compromised in that respect at least, something to marvel at in these days of reversible convictions.

But the time to have made the complaint is not now, it was then, at the beginning of GMA's term. The core values of the coalition—the broader one which included all the groups that made Edsa II possible, not least the press, and not just those who lobbied to become part of the ruling party, not least the spurious wounded—were threatened as far back as that time. Or specifically since "Edsa III," which rocked GMA to the pit of her soul and made her see that the only way she could secure another term—which she little hid from public view, wearing her ambition like perfume bought from the sidewalk of Carriedo—was to make peace with Erap's hordes. And make peace she has, or desperately tried to.

She wrecked those core values completely when a couple of months ago she offered to unite the nation by forgiving and forgetting everyone who pillaged it, including herself and her husband, who stood accused respectively of building a yellow brick road named after Diosdado Macapagal and signing checks under the alias Jose Pidal, the way Erap signed checks under the alias Jose Velarde. The others included Erap, Erap's boys, the Marcoses, the Marcos cronies, and other enemies of government, presumed or real, fringe or mainstream. The more she became unpopular by compromising everything, the more she strove to compromise everything. I am about as surprised that she has included Miriam Santiago in her slate as I am that she ran anyway after saying she wouldn't.

You don't complain, as Bertoldt Brecht warned, when the thugs come to take your neighbor away for being a communist or a Jew, do not complain when they come for you one day for no reason at all. I've been yelling myself hoarse on that point for the last three years, only to find the civil society groups, particularly those that profited from the Peace Bonds (what irony that they should support GMA's warmongering because of it) deaf to entreaty.

But if the so-called administration sucks on that score, so does the so-called opposition. The same excuse GMA has for wooing former enemies is the same excuse FPJ—or Erap (the two are indistinguishable notwithstanding rumored fallouts)—has for wooing former enemies. Loren Legarda, chief of them. Ronald Lumbao and his PMAP may shout their heads off that these elections are a war between the Edsa II and "Edsa III" forces, but it is nothing of the kind. It is not merely that there is no Edsa II left, it is also that there is no "Edsa III" left.

Or a real one to begin with, if by that is meant a movement or campaign or action with a definite purpose or goal in mind. "Edsa III" is a mere look-alike of Edsa I and II. It is as much an Edsa as Willie Nep is as much Erap or FPJ—and Willie is probably more Erap or FPJ (that was a magnificent impersonation of FPJ he did on Pia Hontiveros' "Da King and I") than "Edsa III" is an Edsa. Edsa III was a huge explosion of wrath by the poor, brought on by the sight of Erap being led to the scaffold, or its equivalent for someone who likes wine, women, and song, which is the Veterans Hospital, but not much more.

As the split in their ranks and their efforts to reach out to former enemies show, what makes them the "opposition" is that they are opposed to having been kicked out of power. What binds them together is the desire to come back to power. It is not principle, or morality, or conviction that gives them common cause, it is ambition, which they equally wear on their sleeves like pins bought from a sidewalk in Avenida Rizal. What makes them different from the group headed by GMA is not that they once belonged to the Erap side in the impeachment trial—that is long gone—it is that they are one of two groups seeking power for no other reason than that they like to.

Party-switching is not unknown in this country, it is the rule rather than the exception. And local politicians have always excelled in championing the motto that there are no permanent loyalties, only permanent interests, specifically their own. But the scale at which turncoatism is happening now is enough to put to shame even the collaborators during the Japanese times. I've always said that we are not incapable of rising to heights of great heroism, we are simply incapable of sustaining it, falling to depths of abject mediocrity afterward. I need only add to that that we keep falling to lower and lower depths of mediocrity each time.

Alvarez calls it overwhelming pragmatism, the rest of us would call it, well, one is tempted to say plain and simple opportunism, but at current levels, it's not so plain and not so simple.

Unfavorable times for principles

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

SPEAKER Jose de Venecia does not give up easily. It will be recalled that many weeks ago, he said that the "final push" for Charter change will be made this January. Rebuffed by the Senate majority, led by Senate president Franklin Drilon, on his proposal to effect change through a constituent assembly, JDV has come around to adopt the Senate's idea: a constitutional convention. He now proposes to hold the election of delegates to the ConCon simultaneously with the May national elections to save on expenses and to ensure that the ConCon can be convened by August this year.

JDV has asked Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos about the feasibility of adding one more name to the ballot, and Abalos said it can be done. A resolution calling for a ConCon has been revived in the House and the Speaker has formed a task force to push its passage, headed by Liberal Party president Florencio Abad—a smart move, since Abad can now work on LP chair Drilon to make good his espousal of the ConCon.

* * *

The proposal for President Macapagal-Arroyo to be a transition president who will preside over the shift to a parliamentary-federal system some time in 2007 is obviously designed to steal the thunder from Senators Edgardo Angara and Aquilino Pimentel, who are the chief proponents of a parliamantary system in the Senate and backers of FPJ. Charter change has enjoyed from the beginning the backing of various organizations of local officials, such as the League of Governors, the League of City Mayors and the League of Municipal Mayors, but it got mired on the issue of how to effect that shift. But now the move for a ConCon has also the backing of elements in Mindanao, such as the biggest Muslim party, Ompia Party, the League of Ulamas and even the MILF, largely because of its advocacy of a federal system, which the Mindanaoans want. This should improve GMA's standing in Mindanao where she is said to be rather weak.

* * *

The current political spectacle of politicians jumping from party to party is driving a lot of citizens to despair. For instance, the photo of Sen. Loren Legarda linking arms with former San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada in the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) jarred many sensibilities, since Legarda was among those who were instrumental in deposing Jinggoy's father. Meanwhile, the administration coalition, Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kinabukasan (K-4), has recruited former Sen. Orlando Mercado, Erap's defense secretary who abandoned him in the end, but who ran under the opposition banner in May 2001. K-4 is also leaving the door open to former Sen. Miriam Santiago, who now has the best of both worlds—she is reportedly trying to forge a "truly United Opposition" with Estrada even as K-4 is keeping a senatorial slot open for her in case the deal with Erap doesn't work out. K4 is patiently waiting for her, realizing doubtless the value of that unstoppable mouth haranguing FPJ and Legarda. Miriam knows her political value only too well; she recently said on radio that if the K-4 can't wait for her, it can go ahead without her. But the thought that she vigorously defended Erap in the impeachment trial and months later incited the *masa* to storm the Palace is difficult for some civil society folks to swallow.

* * *

In the meantime, bumped off from the K-4 lineup were two administration officials, Heherson Alvarez and Ernesto Herrera, who had distinguished records in the Senate. As House members, they filed the resolution seeking the impeachment of Erap in October 2000, and it took their colleagues, including Rep. Mike Defensor, a long time to sign that resolution. Now they are excluded from the K-4 lineup, and this drove Herrera to join the FPJ team and Alvarez to file his candidacy as an independent.

It is a hugely confusing situation, but it is clear that principles don't seem to matter, only political expediency; and all that spin about reconciliation is hogwash. For various political groups the overriding objective is to get candidates who have the best chance of wrecking the other group, never mind how. These are the times when I thank God none of my close relatives is in politics.

In President Macapagal's case, it's a pity since she doesn't need to sacrifice principles. Her campaign against criminality, drug-trafficking and terrorism has been paying off. The rise in portfolio investments and the urge in the stock market are evidence that her administration is making great headway. Politically, however, it has taken a disastrous route, with some of its candidates.

* * *

There are attempts in the media to make Alvarez look like he sought Erap's blessing to be included in the opposition lineup. The media gave credence to the story of Ferdie Ramos, a close Erap confidante, that the Lakas-CMD spokesperson sought the deposed president's help, but Alvarez has vigorously denied it. I find it difficult to believe that Alvarez would join the opposition, for that is exactly the issue he has raised against the entry of Mercado and Santiago into the Lakas lineup. That tale about his seeking Erap's blessings is that camp's revenge for his leading the impeachment fight. Moreover, Alvarez has been batting for good governance, which is why very powerful vested interests in the Palace have moved against him.

If I may offer Alvarez unsolicited advice, he should either run as an independent, which may be suicidal since it's a very expensive enterprise and he has no assurance of victory; or he could retire from politics with his name unsullied. Sadly, these are not favorable times for principled people, but there's life after politics. Alvarez's expertise on environmental matters is something that foreign governments would pay handsomely to harness.

Loren's big gamble

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

SHE'S never struck me as a gambler, or someone who would risk all in pursuit of a short-term goal. In fact, in the perception of many, Senator and now opposition vice-presidential candidate Loren Legarda has been a "*segurista*" through most of her political career. This may explain her rapid rise from political novice to the third highest-ranking officer in the Senate (before she resigned as majority floor leader) and now contender for the second highest office in the land.

In this contest, Loren is putting everything on the line. She is up for re-election to the Senate, and according to credible public opinion polls, she would almost surely have emerged as the top contender. And that, she explains, is one reason she has taken this huge gamble.

"I've already topped the Senate race," she remarks, "it's time for me to prove something else." And so she is running for vice president and thereby leaving herself with no Plan B, no place to run for refuge should she and her running mate lose in May. Her main opponent, Sen. Noli de Castro, in contrast, has a three-year term left in the Senate and could always return to the chamber should he not prevail.

Fine, but why take this gamble by the side of Fernando Poe Jr., who in the eyes of many is but a proxy candidate for Erap, the man she helped oust from the presidency?

* * *

"THE MAN has character," Loren avers. "We share the same goals: good governance, transparency, national unity."

"What does it take to be president?" she asks rhetorically. "Does someone have to go to Harvard to be qualified to be president? While I think it takes both competence and character to be a good leader, I would place more value on character. Sometimes, a good education without a good character can only help you steal and cheat more."

If only from a cosmetic point of view, Fernando Poe Jr. and Loren Legarda would seem a dream team, indeed. Footage of them (and Poe's wife Susan Roces) making their way through an eager crowd outside the Comelec conjured images of stars walking down the red carpet at an awards show. But even in cold political calculations, their pairing makes sense. They are both charismatic personalities with strong followings and personal factors that complement the other's. Where Loren might be viewed by those among the *masa* as "*sosyal*," or elitist, FPJ has the magic common touch. And while FPJ might be disdained and distrusted by the business community and social elite for his lack of education and refinement, Loren can compensate with her social connections and media pedigree.

Asked about the image of the country as a perpetual loser if yet another actor is elected president, Loren says with confidence: "Maybe that's where I can help. I hope investors will be reassured if they know that I will be part of his administration."

But each of them has also proven to be a liability. Loren's presence by his side has cost FPJ the loyalty of the most rabid of pro-Erap forces, who now seem to have agreed to tolerate her presence in the opposition ticket only because of the votes she can guarantee. And by joining FPJ, Loren is aware that she has lost a substantial portion of the A-B crowd, particularly the Edsa II forces who once hailed her as a heroine of the entire anti-Erap protest movement.

* * *

MAYBE this is why, even if she is on the brink of fast-tracking her ascent through the political ranks, Loren these days is looking and sounding harassed and stressed.

Over dinner, she sounds energized enough as she recounts the "positive" reception she received from the urban poor leaders of the Erap camp whom she met earlier that day. But she quickly fades, and before she has to leave for a TV interview, she exclaims: "My God! This is like a rehearsal for the questions that Pia Hontiveros will ask me!"

I feel almost guilty as I watch her on "Strictly Politics" minutes later, looking visibly tired and drained, and rather strained as she explains her decision to cast her lot with Poe. Who can blame her for feeling she's being asked to explain herself once too often? But then, can you blame a skeptical public who've yet to get used to the idea of her new found chumminess with the likes of Ronald Lumbao?

I wonder. Loren assures that "there is no need" for her to apologize to Erap loyalists for the role she played in the impeachment trial, and that she never even entertained the idea. When she met with Erap, she says, and in all her talks with FPJ, the matter of an apology was never brought up. It's all intrigue created by Malacañang, she says.

But has she ever asked for an apology from Erap and his cronies? Has she ever asked them to tell the truth about such shenanigans like the BW scandal, the mistresses' mansions and the *jueteng* kickbacks?

* * *

"TO GIVE the people a choice" is how Loren explains her decision to accept Poe's offer to be his running mate. Though long courted by Raul Roco (who conducted his courtship only through emissaries, she says), Ping Lacson and Poe, she says, she decided to accept the most serious offer (from Poe) only after Malacañang announced the choice of Noli de Castro as GMA's running mate.

"I thought about it, and I realized that of all the names being floated for vice president, only I could give Noli a good fight. That's why I decided to jump into the fray. The people deserve a good, credible choice."

How annoying it must be, then, to find herself now having to justify her candidacy and her loyalty to Poe at every turn. About the most dismaying thing that can happen to a running mate is to discover that, instead of improving the main man's chances, one is instead his greatest liability. That's something Loren is working—and gambling on—to turn around.

Mars landing

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

HAVE your ever caught yourself suddenly conscious that you were smiling? After being so engrossed with something you're watching or listening to, you suddenly became conscious that your facial muscles have rearranged themselves to form a smile.

That's what happened to me last Sunday afternoon while watching on TV the press briefing on the Spirit rover's Mars landing. I was too engrossed it took some time for me to realize I was wearing a grin that didn't want to go away. I wanted to freeze my grin and go to the mirror to see how silly I looked but I didn't want to miss what the Nasa team was saying to the media.

They were all in their work clothes, looking so casual, so bright, so scientist. Only the politicians were in dark suits. Everybody was in a celebratory mood, champagne flowed, there were cheers and tears. Murphy's Law didn't apply this time and everything went perfect.

How could one not share their joy and triumph? I have always loved science stories like this, momentous breakthroughs that make one say, "Things will never be the same again."

In fact mission manager Peter Theisinger said something like that. "You have no idea how this feels," he was quoted as saying. I did catch him saying, "The world will never be the same again." I had pen and paper and I was able to jot that down.

These guys weren't made for TV like Carl Sagan, the astronomer-host who held people in thrall a decade or so ago with the blockbuster TV docu series "Cosmos." But the Nasa guys did great by just being themselves, groping for words to describe how they felt inside and doing away with astronomy jargon. Oh, but how I wished Sagan were alive to witness all this (he died in 1996 at the age of 62), for him to add a dash of stardust and mystical language to the commentary. Surely he would have been interviewed.

"The world will never be the same again." It was a piece of rhetoric, I know, and I even agreed with Theisinger there. But it also hit me like a wayward Skylab piece hurtling to earth. (Remember Skylab? Filipino space freaks named places, vehicles and honky-tonk joints after it. Even Sputnik still lives on as pets and as a crime gang.)

Why did Theisinger's words hit me so? Because the world is still very much the same as yesterday, wracked with pain and strife. If at all it isn't the same, it is because it is worse in the trouble department.

During momentous events, like when humans first landed on the moon, or when great individuals were born or killed, it is always good to take note of what happened during that time. Where were you, what were you doing? What were the news headlines on the day of your birth? What was the world like when Jesus was born? What was the reach of the Roman Empire?

Well, thank God for historians, journalists and writers from all walks of life, we know many things.

Speaking of empires, my grin was all but wiped out when a thought crossed my mind. Will the Mars landing presage more human conquests in outer space that could give rise to planetary empires? *Iyo ang Mars, akin ang Venus*. Mars, the Red Planet, is named after the Roman god of war.

The mission to Mars is supposed to discover whether life forms once existed or could exist on the planet. The mission cost $820 million. I think about that and I couldn't help thinking of CNN's recently-aired "Surviving Hunger," which was about one journalist's 30-day participatory odyssey into the pit of hunger in Ethiopia, Planet Earth. By Day 20 or so, the video crew had to emergency feed the journalist, otherwise the documentary would end with his funeral. (He was chasing the flies away and whining all the time and I couldn't help but be amused.)

The killjoys will say that we humans cannot even take good care of our own planet and here is the US spending that staggering amount to explore Mars and search for signs of life. A search has in fact been going on for years now, not just on Mars but outside our solar system, not just for life but for extraterrestrial intelligence. I have this book "First Contact: The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence," (Seti) written by the world's leading astronomers who confront the question: Are we alone in the universe?

I really hope to see life from out there in my own lifetime. This could throw out so many of our beliefs, shake our religious faith, challenge contemporary theology, make us appreciate our ecosystem. It could change the way we look at ourselves and all of creation, and most of all, the way we treat one another. Maybe it is worth all that expense?

To recall, the space draft Voyager was launched in 1977, to explore deep space outside of our solar system, for millions of years. It is now journeying through billions of stars, to the edge of the universe so to speak, hoping to find a finder. It is carrying a record that contains 118 pictures, music, human voices, greetings in 54 languages (including several Filipino languages), sounds of earth, etc. The book "Murmurs of the Earth: The Voyager Interstellar Record" is about this effort.

Wrote Sagan: "No one sends such a message on such a journey without a positive passion for the future. For all the possible vagaries of the message, any recipient could be sure that we were a species endowed with hope and perseverance, at least a little intelligence, substantial generosity and a palpable zest to make contact with the cosmos."

We want to find, and we also want to be found. But all that exploration of alien landscapes should also lead us to our own inner landscape, to discover what is good and to root out the evil that lie hidden there.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

A peck on the cheek

YOUNG BLOOD

Dacedille

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WHEN do people start to forget? How do people move on? How do people face life after saying "It's over"? Is there such a thing as forgetting and moving on? Is there such a thing such as over? If there is, how should I start to forget then? How should I tell myself that it's over and that I need to tell my feet to start moving and take a new path, on to a new direction?

Am I totally over him? It has been quite a while since we exchanged goodbyes. It was not a painful one, not at all dramatic, not coated with tears. There was no sad music playing in the background. It didn't have a mournful sunset or a desolate landscape for a backdrop.

I was sitting on the front seat of his car, while he was on the driver's seat. I told him to just drop me off somewhere on Edsa, and I'd find my way home from there. When he finally pulled over, we gave each other a quick glance.

"So, what are you going to do next?" he murmured. I thought of giving him a goodbye kiss. The last one. The only best thing I could think of giving him.

But what kind of a goodbye kiss? A peck on the cheek would be too casual and too friendly. I was becoming uneasy. "Goodbye," I said in a somewhat flirty tone.

He made a face that made him look like a schoolboy.

"Here, let me give you a goodbye kiss," I said, aiming my pouting lips at his cheeks, but he moved away. He didn't want to be kissed. He didn't want my goodbye kiss. So, I straightened up and opened the door and got off his car.

I stood near his car, waved at him sweetly and threw him a sultry kiss. He made a face again, his way of protesting that I was making fun of him again.

We didn't meet again, for many months. But recently a friend arranged a group dinner and then we saw each other.

He was with a girl, his girl of the moment perhaps, while I was alone with no boy of the moment in tow. When I set my eyes on him, I suddenly felt an unexplainable gladness sweeping over me. I couldn't kiss him or hug him tight just like what old friends do after a long separation. I just smiled at him and started to talk.

I started telling him about my plans. I could not understand why I had to tell him things when I was so curious to know what he had been doing. He seemed eager to listen to me. He seemed excited, too. (But until now I am not sure if he really looked eager and excited or it's just how I wanted to see things. In other words, I could be nursing an illusion.)

I was smiling the whole evening. I couldn't stop myself from talking. No, I was not trying to impress him. I could tell everybody that I was doing great, I was holding a wonderful job and I couldn't stop myself from smiling. But questions were swirling around me: What made me so happy? Was it my job? The salad my friend and I shared? Or was it because I saw him at last after months of wishing that I would bump into him at the mall or see his car pass me by as I was hailing a taxicab?

A few days before the dinner, there were already butterflies in my tummy. I could hardly sleep, thinking that I would see him again.

When I finally saw him, I couldn't seem to get enough of him. I remembered the moment when, teary-eyed, speechless, and in great awe, I applauded the great landscape of Italy in the movie "Under the Tuscan Sun."

No, he didn't look as gorgeous as Brad Pitt. He still had the bulging tummy that I used to hate, but eventually loved. Great that he still had clean fingernails and his toenails looked nice and tidy. One of the last few activities we had together was a trip to Tips and Toes for a pedicure. Yes, he looked fairly handsome that night. In fact, he made me remember of my newly-washed curtains, fresh and crisp. It was great talking to him like a long-lost friend.

That night, I was bursting with joy. He gave me a ride home. It wasn't he who offered to bring me home, I asked him if he would. He was supposed to drop me somewhere, but it was rather late and I was feeling tired, so I insisted that he drop me right in front of my house. I didn't give a damn if it was out of the way.

When we finally got to my place, I got out of the car, walked straight to the front gate, turned around and waved him goodbye. I wished he got my directions right and found his way out of the subdivision.

As I approached the front door, I drew a deep, long sigh. This was the second time he took me straight home. Both times, he was with his "girl of the moment."

What are those girls for, anyway? Are they his props? His way of telling me that I don't mean a thing anymore and he's finally gotten over me? Is he using them to make me bloody angry, mad and jealous? Well, too bad the strategy doesn't work well on me.

I often asked myself if he ever really loved me. Now, I think the answer is clear: not enough. Not enough to make him look for me and see where I am. Not enough to make him consider my feelings. He knows nothing about me, except perhaps my name and my sweet, sweet smile. For sure, he knows nothing of the mystery that lurks behind that name or that smile. If he never bothered to find the way to my house, how could he ever know me? No, he doesn't know that I go crazy over green mangoes (dipped in *bagoong*) as much as he does. No, he doesn't know me at all.

How do I forget? How do I say it's over? How do I say that everything stops here and it's final?

Questions like these bring me back to the time when I first learned to ride a bicycle without touching the handle bar. I was an eagle then, soaring, conquering old fears. It made me remember the time in my childhood when I finally reached the top of the coconut tree. I was a monkey then, wise and clever. It made me recall the very first time I felt brave and strong enough to do a balancing act on the steep and narrow rope of survival, screaming at my mother, "Look, Nay, I made it. No hands!"

I was happiest that night because I felt invincible. Things turned out well because I finally came to reconcile myself to the reality we could never be any more than friends.

No, there's no forgetting. No, there's no saying that it's all over. A new story has just started. His story. My story. Our story goes on.

That's when he dropped me at my house, I gave him a peck on the cheek. Too casual. Too friendly.

Dacedille, 23, works in a non-profit organization that provides assistance to the Japanese youth in starting a new life.

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Staying put, also

ALL the depressing stories I've been reading in the newspapers during the past few years seems to have dashed my hopes that the country will get any better. And I hated this feeling considering that I'm only 21 years old and a recent UST Education graduate who should be facing the future with much optimism and idealism. I keep telling myself that there will be a time of redemption for this nation and that God is just testing us, waiting for us to make a change. And I have fervently been praying for that transition to finally happen this year so that everything—from our state of economy to our national pride—will start going uphill from a change.

Reading Conrado de Quiros's Jan. 1, 2003 column, "Staying put," helped me regain confidence in my own firm belief that staying put in this country despite opportunities to work abroad is not such an unwise, self-sacrificing decision or option for me. But until there's a sign of this happening, more and more Filipinos will continue to line up at the US, Canadian, Japanese and other embassies, to get out of this country.

Last year, the TV program "The Correspondents" featured two episodes on the lives of Filipino teachers in the United States, which showed us how pampered they are with their salaries, enabling them to live in luxurious houses, have at least one or even two expensive cars, and own many things that are beyond the wildest dreams of most of our teachers here in the Philippines (of course, we don't include teachers from the International School or Brent here).

Yes, it's indeed nice to live a life of comfort and plenty, and I do wish to get rich someday, too. But everything comes with a price. I know of some relatives abroad who, as De Quiros said, "work their asses off" and don't even have time to "smell the flowers." I have seen some who, in proving themselves in other countries, have turned ruthless and lost any trace of the gracious, gentle-hearted Pinoy. It's not that I am scared and discouraged to take the foreign road to progress and affluence. It's just that I feel I need not bother to right now; I am happy where I am. Working to earn, earning to acquire so many things could be just like eating to sustain one's body just to be able to work! That's it. This cycle does not appeal to me.

And at this stage, my still "resolute nationalism" is another reason why I intend to work here in the Philippines. Why should foreigners benefit from my intelligence, creativity and capabilities, and not my own countrymen?

In a country where others have lost their hope, I shall remain motivated. The Philippines is not a God-forsaken place, and I know nice things can still happen here. And I am one of those who want to make something of myself here. It's because I know that my education is enough for me to be somebody and that makes me feel confident. The Philippine soil has dried up? Let me be one of those to water it.

—CLAUDE LUCAS C. DESPABILADERAS,
40 Zorra St., SFDM, QC

Will new foreign affairs head succeed where Ople failed?

THE BIGGEST group of overseas Filipino workers and their families challenge newly appointed Foreign Secretary Delia Domingo Albert to "take up the cudgels for distressed overseas Filipinos—a task that the late Blas Ople failed to do as foreign secretary."

We are quite informed of Albert's 36-year service record at the Department of Foreign Affairs. But for overseas Filipinos and their families, this track record of service is relatively unknown, if any. She assumes the DFA leadership that has been generally negligent of our compatriots who are in distressful situations abroad under the late Secretary Ople.

Albert's appointment has come at a time the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia has viciously removed 16 Filipino hunger strikers from the chancery and handed them over to police last Dec. 21. The 16 workers also say they have received death threats for speaking out against the Philippine chancery.

The stranded workers, who ran away from abusive employers, were shackled and escorted to a hospital by police and later released. They said the threats came from goons allegedly hired by embassy officials. All they were pleading for through the hunger strike, was for their immediate repatriation that the DFA could easily do when it mustered the political will to take action.

Today, they are hiding in different places because of the threats of arrest, detention and torture.

We strongly recommend that Secretary Albert, for starters, must recall all embassy officials for being the leaders of these actions that violated the rights of distressed OFWs. Ambassador Bahnarim Guinomla, Consuls Jainal Rasul and Mariano Dumia, must immediately be recalled and charged with dereliction of duties to help OFWs. The 16 hunger strikers and the rest of the 300 stranded workers must be immediately repatriated.

If these types of diplomatic personnel man Philippine posts abroad, our embassies and consulates can never be sanctuaries for overseas Filipinos. The officials of the Philippine Embassy in Riyadh should be removed because of the shameless way the hunger strike of the stranded OFWs was effectively terminated.

This would be a good initial step for Secretary Albert to take in stamping her brand of leadership at the DFA, if she wants to address the needs of distressed OFWs in need of immediate and appropriate assistance.

—JOHN MONTERONA,
vice chair,
Migrante Sectoral Party
115-B Kamuning Rd., QC

Balking at Caloocan's 'historic walk'

THIS is an appeal to the city government of Caloocan, particularly those behind the closing of the eastern portion of the Monumento Circle.

In behalf of the jeepney drivers and commuters who pass through the MacArthur Highway, I would just like to bring to Mayor Rey Malonzo's attention the big inconvenience it has meant to passengers like me. It would normally take me 45 minutes to one hour to reach home, but now with the blocking of this so-called "Historical Walk," it has increased my travel time by 30 minutes sans traffic, but one hour or more if I am caught in a traffic jam. With the onset of the rainy season, we are expecting worse to happen.

Jeepney drivers are also irked because of this unnecessary long U-turn to Edsa that they have to take instead of just crossing the Circle (I do not know what is the apt term, now that it is no longer a Circle), not to mention the amount of fuel wasted. It is a good thing that there is no increase in the jeepney fare because it must be almost a kilometer detour.

I believe nobody in his right mind, whose main concern is the welfare of his countrymen, would dare close a national road where all vehicles pass.

It is alleged that the said beautification project is part of *"serbisyo publiko,"* or is it *"perwisyo publiko"*?

What is also irritating about politicians is that every time they have a project, their life-size pictures (sometimes, they even include family members) and names are blatantly put on view for everyone to see. As if the money spent for the projects came from their own pockets, when in fact, it is the taxpayers' money.

—ELAINE P. DIZON,
epdiz@yahoo.com

No less human or righteous

THIS is in reaction to the article about my wedding that sends alarm bells ringing in church. (PDI, 12/17/03) The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' hatred for gay people is not surprising. Let me just clarify some points before the bishops burn people like me on a stake like a faggot. My partner and I are both gay and unfortunately for the CBCP, we're both devout Catholics and intend to be so until we die. My partner and I are former lector-commentators and once became part of a church choir here in Baguio. It is just sad to know that our church leaders continue to promote discrimination and hate while lascivious homosexual activities and uncontainable sex scandals are blatant realities within their own turf. Yet we believe that the Lord's love and forgivingness are unconditional and universal.

We entered into a relationship six years ago and decided to have a holy union last month, and invited Fr. Richard Mickley of the Order of St. Aelred to officiate at the ceremony. It was a beautiful wedding and probably the happiest moment of our lives. Our liturgical reading was taken from 1 Samuel 20:1-16 and 2 Samuel 1:26 about the love covenant of King David and his lover Jonathan. The evening affair was all about love as even our families stood witness to our vows. My partner and I felt loved and accepted.

I deeply feel sorry for the CBCP for not being there to witness our wedding and feel the love that conquered all of us that evening. I pray that God would pour His wisdom upon our church leaders so that they would learn that hate has never been a good moral value to teach. Although let me assure Baguio-Benguet Bishop Carlito Cenzon that no gay couple in their right mind would ever ask the Catholic church to bless gay unions. My partner and I never sought their services so they don't have to remind people their religious mandate not to bless same-sex unions because people already know.

There's no need to toll the bells of bigotry and hate through another pastoral letter among the Catholic faithful less they isolate themselves from millions of Catholic lesbians and gays serving the church today.

I am glad that my wedding opened up rooms for discussion and reminded other gay and lesbian couples that God equally loves them. May it also remind our self-righteous church leaders that being gay and loving people of the same sex doesn't make a man less human nor less righteous in the eyes of God, but homophobia and bigotry do.

—DAVID R. YAMZON,
dryamzon@hotmail.com

Repeating the past

IT was discussed on "Magandang Umaga Bayan" that Filipinos in Los Angeles, California are united in supporting Fernando Poe Jr. in his bid for the presidency. I live in Los Angeles and I know for a fact that such is not the case.

The problem with us, Filipinos, is that we have very short memories. Have we not learned our lesson from the Estrada years?

It well behooves us to ponder on the words of George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

—NILDA L. TIU-ARGUELLES,
Los Angeles, California, USA

A way out of the morass

I WISH to thank Randy David for the hope that he provided in his column titled "The mass media in democracy." By clarifying the mass media's role in our national life, he mapped one concrete way out of the political and socio-spiritual morass that we as a nation are now mired in.

I think many share my observation that much of our immaturity as a nation stems from our failure to educate our people, and that the primary institutions tasked with this responsibility, namely government, schools, church, home and the mass media, have all failed in this regard. That is why we have been able to put someone like Erap in the highest echelon of power. That is why we are now in danger of repeating the same mistake with the likes of Fernando Poe Jr. in the coming elections.

Is it for lack of information that we have failed? We have so much information passing before our eyes, over our heads and between our ears. Obviously, in generating information—which is the main currency of education—quantity is not enough. Rather, any institution tasked with the dissemination of information should look to the proper and responsible generation, interpretation and translation of information into knowledge within its sphere of influence. Society's goal is not to churn out brilliant babblers but to shape critical and creative minds and hearts that will comprise a responsible learning community willing and capable of transforming our world into a nobler and more humane place.

The arena of the public forum that David envisions is a major step in that direction. A rational political debate that will clarify issues, expose assumptions, explore ramifications and extrapolate the consequences of decisions can help bring lucidity to our otherwise murky national thought life and perhaps equip us as a people to choose rightly. But time is also extremely short and running out. Can the goal of clarity be achieved in the span of four months? We should have started a long time ago.

And knowledge alone will not bring about the transformation we seek. History is replete with examples of educated people who nevertheless missed the mark. We have someone like Edgardo Angara—former Senate president, former president of the University of the Philippines, certainly a highly educated man—espousing the most immoral cause of an Erap, and now pushing for the candidacy of someone whose only qualification for the presidency is his popularity among a people fed on lies and illusions. We have this carnival of an electoral process propelled not by principle but by the ignominious standard of "winnability"—whatever that means—abetted by the highest leaders of the land. And hardly anyone finds anything wrong with the whole process.

Clearly we need more than just knowledge. We need wisdom to be able to sort out the options proffered by knowledge, and courage to choose rightly especially when the choice is a difficult one. Both wisdom and courage are moral qualities forged over time in the character of a people. I see next to nothing of these among the leaders of this land.

—LESLIE LOFRANCO-BERBANO,
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12 seconds in the air

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

"WE see centuries worth of imagination brought to a bleak, almost completely anonymous fruition."

That's how Patrick Smith, an American pilot and writer, summarizes his feelings about a photograph capturing the first successful flight of the Wright brothers' "Flyer," on Dec. 17, 1903. There were no crowds, no publicity when Flyer took off on a cold winter day, from a beach in North Carolina.

There has been a flurry of articles about 100 years of aviation, acknowledging the Wright brothers' flight as a turning point in humanity's attempts to take to the sky, but Smith is right about that event being almost anticlimactic after centuries of more dramatic experiments.

As early as 1000 B.C. the Chinese were sending off humans in large kites to spy on enemy troops and in the year 1010 A.D., we hear of a Benedictine monk, Oliver of Malmesbury, taking off from his monastery, apparently imitating the mythological character Icarus and flying a distance of 125 paces before falling and breaking his legs. There were others who were even less fortunate than the monk, losing their lives as they tried to fly with contraptions that mostly tried to imitate the birds.

In the 15th century, the genius Leonardo da Vinci anticipated the modern helicopter with a design for an "aerial screw," which scientists today say would have worked with a few modifications. Da Vinci never tried manned flights.

In 1783, the French brothers, Joseph and Jacques Montgolfier, successfully launched hot-air balloons over several months: in June, a balloon without anything in it; in September, with a rooster, duck and sheep; and then finally in December, two men but not the brothers themselves. That first manned balloon floated 3,500 in the air and drifted 36 kilometers.

In 1804, Sir George Caley successfully launched a precursor of our airplane today: a glider, which was still an imitation of birds in flight. But these machines just didn't seem feasible for sustained flights. In the end, the answers had to come from the Wright brothers, two high school dropouts (see?) who made their living selling bicycles. Their answer to the mystery of flight actually came from their business, when they realized that they needed to build a contraption that could "balance" itself in the air much like we do on the ground when we bike.

The successful debut of the Wright Flyer took all of 12 seconds, covering a mere 37 meters. You might ask, what was the big deal then?

Well, if it were not for the Wright brothers, we'd probably still be flying around in gliders, balloons and zeppelins over limited distances, and risking our lives. The Hindenberg airship explosion in 1937 was an example of what could happen, a Titanic in the sky. Gliders were also limited because you're pretty much left to the mercy of the winds. No wonder hang-gliding is a recreational sport, meant for the more adventurous.

The Wright brothers' Flyer was the first powered, manned and controlled flight, opening possibilities for long-distance aviation. Yet that first flight was mentioned only in three newspapers. Using their own funds, the brothers improved their machine and, three months later, were able to get their Flyer into the air for 45 minutes. They wrote their congressman asking for help, and got a form letter saying the US government did not fund "experiments."

In October 1905, the Wright brothers launched the third successful flight for their Flyer, this time covering 24 miles in 38 minutes. They wrote the US government asking for financial support, and were again rebuffed.

It was not until 1908 that the US War Department finally saw the potential of these flying machines and made their first purchase. In the years that followed, these machines developed rapidly, with many other scientists joining in to develop their own versions and with governments subsidizing the production of these planes for mail service, transport... and war.

Planes became killing machines, allowing humans to wreak tremendous damage on the enemy from a safe distance. The full horror of this potential is exemplified by the atomic bombs dropped from US war planes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, killing hundreds of thousands of Japanese.

On the bright side, planes have allowed us to travel much faster, radically transforming the ways we deal with each other, whether for business, politics, diplomacy, science, or for personal matters. As recently as the 19th century, few imagined that one day "flying" would no longer be metaphorical, as in flying home to marry that childhood sweetheart, to catch the birth of a child, or, on a sadder note, to be by someone's deathbed or to bid farewell to the deceased.

It took several thousand years for early humans to move out of Africa into the rest of the world. Then we learned to navigate the oceans with ships, cutting travel time, from continent to continent, down to years, then to months. Today, you can take several flights in succession to literally chase the sun, going around the world in less than two days.

But note that we seem to have reached the limits to speed with airplanes. When the jet age was ushered in by the Boeing 707 in 1959, non-stop flying time from New York to Los Angeles was six hours. That's about the same flying time today even with the newer jets.

There was, of course, the Concorde which flew faster than the speed of sound, but it was phased out just last year because it was too expensive. Today, the airline industry is oriented toward developing jumbo jets for longer, rather than faster flights, and packing more passengers into each flight, especially into cattle, oops, I mean economy, class.

Next month, Singapore Airlines will inaugurate a non-stop flight between Singapore and Los Angeles, which will keep passengers up in the air for a record 18 hours for the 8,000 mile trip. We've come a long way indeed from that 12-second, 37-meter flight, a hundred years ago.

* * *

Comments to miguel@pinoykasi.net

Improving public perception of gov't employees

WE commend Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino-David for her efforts in improving the delivery of services by public servants, particularly the Public Service Delivery Audit or Pasada, featured in the news item on Page A7 of the INQUIRER's Dec. 18, 2003 issue.

We support programs that would help monitor government officials and employees' promptness, competence and good manners in dealing with the public that deserves excellent service from them as they are the ones paying their salaries through taxes and fees being collected by the government..

As an organization, we are working toward a vision of a transformed government where government employees will be models of efficiency and competence. We long for the day when at the mention of a government employee, the image that will form in the minds of people will no longer be of sloppy, corrupt, inefficient automatons going through the motions of working (in slow motion) and wasting people's time and money by loafing, gossiping, selling all kinds of stuff or coming up with questionable strategies for making a fast buck.

Of course, we know a lot of government employees who are really honest, hardworking, efficient and competent but it seems they are still in the minority so that people still have a negative view of public servants on the whole.

May there be more heads of government agencies who will seriously get down to the level of the masses of people lining up for documents and following-up papers day after day and feel with them and realize their right to courtesy and good service.

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Bets flock to Zambo to visit late mayor

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Action star and presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr. (FPJ) showed up at the wake of Mayor Maria Clara Lobregat at the Metropolitan Immaculate Conception Cathedral here late Tuesday night.

On board a private plane, Poe arrived here at around 10 p.m. to attend the last vigil for the mayor, causing a commotion among mourners who tried to see the action star, who was greeted by Rep. Celso Lobregat, the mayor's son.

Priests and lay leaders appealed to and pacified the mourners.

Immediately after Poe viewed the mayor's remains, he left with his supporters.

Poe is the second presidential aspirant who showed up at the wake. On Tuesday morning, President Macapagal-Arroyo paid a visit.

Poe, however, left for Manila two hours after he met with local LDP leaders led by mayoral aspirant Celso Lobregat.

Yesterday, candidate for senator Edgardo Angara also paid a visit.

Presidential candidate Panfilo Lacson also showed up yesterday.

Representative Lobregat said the presence of the presidential aspirants at the wake of his mother "had nothing to do with politics, they are family friends and they are just extending their condolences."

The visits happened despite the scheduled two-day vigil at the Santuario de San Antonio in Forbes Park, Makati City starting yesterday afternoon until Saturday when the mayor's remains will be buried at the Manila Memorial Park in Sucat, Parañaque. *Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

GOV, RIVAL TRADE RAPS

Surigao poll cauldron sizzles

TANDAG, Surigao del Sur—Re-electionist Gov. Vicente Pimentel, Jr. allegedly poked a gun at former Tago town Mayor Gregorio Murillo Jr. inside the provincial office of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) here on Monday evening.

But Pimentel yesterday denied the allegations and said he was filing charges against Murillo.

In a complaint filed before the police here on Tuesday morning, Murillo said he went to the Comelec office to file his certificate of candidacy as the official candidate for vice governor of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) around 10 p.m.

Murillo said after filing his CoC, he sat near the stairs leading to the Comelec office.

At about this time, he said Pimentel arrived with about 20 bodyguards on board three vehicles.

Murillo said Pimentel, of the administration Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, immediately alighted from one of the vehicles and approached him.

He said without uttering any word, Pimentel poked a gun at him. He did not specify what gun the governor allegedly used.

Pimentel, who filed his CoC on Monday morning, admitted he returned to the Comelec office to see the list of those who already filed their CoCs.

However, he said he decided not to go upstairs anymore.

Pimentel said he only asked an aide to see the list and stayed near the stairs.

He said he did not see Murillo there.

"How could have I pointed a gun at Greg Murillo when I did not even see him that night? (He) must be hallucinating," Pimentel said in a radio interview.

He also denied Murillo's charge that he brought many bodyguards with him.

But Murillo stood pat on his allegations and even instructed his lawyer Jake Zafra to file charges against Pimentel.

Pimentel said he was also filing charges against Murillo for making false claims. He said he also instructed his lawyer Gerardo Maglinte to include the names of some reporters who aired Murillo's false claims.

"This is a dirty gimmick by my political opponents to create chaos in my province, the bad consequences of which will be blamed on me," he said.

Meanwhile, Murillo said Pimentel was trying to derail his candidacy by secretly fielding a vice gubernatorial candidate who is also surnamed Murillo.

Leopoldo del Valle Murillo, a fish dealer here, filed his CoC before the provincial Comelec office at about 11:15 p.m. Monday.

Murillo said the fish dealer is an ally of Pimentel.

The governor did not comment on the allegation.

The Pimentels and the Murillos of this province are bitter political enemies. *Bert Pacate, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

AQUILES ZONIO/PDI PHOTO

A CHAMPION'S LIFE
Zarlit Rodrigo's hands used to be quick and powerful enough to earn him a championship belt in the World Boxing Confederation's mini-flyweight category. Zarlit's fights nowadays shifted from the ring to the streets, where he works as a shoe repair man, following a bout with hepatitis B.

1 dead, 21 hurt as bus smashes into tricycle

STO.DOMINGO, Albay—A 16-year-old student from Sto. Domingo, Albay died and at least 21 passengers where injured when a 30-seat bus bumped a tricycle with three passengers and both fell in the spillway of Barangay Lidong, Sto. Domingo, Albay at 7:30 a.m. yesterday.

Gloria Arcos, Bicol Regional Training and Teaching Hospital (BRTTH) spokesperson, identified the casualty as Wilfredo Balderama who died on arrival at the BRTTH.

Balderama was with sister Jonaida and brother Alvin in the tricycle.

Arcos said most of the injured passengers were students, "since they were on their way to school."

BRTTH personnel, she added, were the ones who identified some of the injured passengers since most of them were immediately brought to the hospital.

She said most of the injured were in a state of shock.

Initial reports by the Sto. Domingo Municipal Police Office said a Borromeo Liner bus was approaching the spillway when its brakes got stuck, prompting the driver to swerve to the right.

The bus, whose passengers were mostly students living in Sto. Domingo and Tabaco towns, hit the tricycle's front. The two vehicles smashed into a bridge railing and fell into the spillway.

The accident stopped traffic for 15 minutes. *Gil Francis G. Arevalo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Cebu archbishop seeks more good people in public office

By Bernadette A. Parco
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal has two wishes for the New Year—for "good and able" people to have the courage to run for public office and for politicians to stop using the term "masa" when referring to the poor people.

"We cannot hope for a change if there are no good leaders. I hope those who are registered are good leaders as they say and that they will really serve the people," he told reporters after saying Mass on New Year's Eve at the archbishop's residence.

"This is if it's possible, because who else could run? This is not that I mean that those who are registered are not good people. But as much as possible the good people must have the courage to run for office," he said.

Without referring to any politician, Vidal made a potshot on the loose use of the term "masa" in political platforms when pertaining to the people in class D and E of society in his homily.

He said the masa being referred to have names and faces, as they could be the drivers, housemaids and the rank and file.

The cardinal, however, said the masses were being treated "like faceless people."

"We just call them 'masa' so we lose our respect for them and we do not pay attention to their needs and dignity as a human being," he added.

Vidal also renewed his call for the people to be alert and encouraged them to "participate and participate honestly" in the coming elections.

Ex-MILF camp turns out titled privately under gov't settlement program

COTABATO CITY—Some 17,000 hectares of what used to be the Moro Islamic Liberation Front's Camp Abubakar turned out to be a domain of private property titled to beneficiaries of an old settlement project of the government.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (DENR-ARMM) said this could legally contradict the declaration of President Macapagal-Arroyo of the area as a military reservation that would host Camp Iranun.

Kahal Kedtag, district environment and natural resources officer of Maguindanao, said the agency has dug up files of 70 pre-patent titles issued to the beneficiaries of the Economic Development Corps.

Popularly known as Edcor Farms, the settlement program has 37 sites nationwide and the ones in Mindanao and Luzon were mostly implemented during the term of President Ramon Magsaysay in 1953.

He said the private ownership was only discovered lately, because transfer has yet to be completed on old documents pertaining to lands from the national government to the autonomous region.

Kedtag cited the titled ownership by one Tomahop Sarmiento of more than 50,000 hectares of the settlement area. The rest, he said, were titled in the names of 70 other individuals, all Christians.

"These are definitely old titles," DENR-ARMM records officials said, referring to the official ownership documents.

Sources at the 6th Infantry Division said the 603rd Brigade has started complying with orders to occupy the former Camp Abubakar, following the President's directive in a speech during her visit to Maguindanao last year.

In the post-World War II agrarian unrest in Central Luzon and Panay, the government designed the Edcor farms scheme to lure insurgents and provide homestead for ex-servicemen.

Edcor had 37 settlement sites nationwide with a total area of over 600,000 hectares.

Settlers said to be endangering a critical watershed area in Maguindanao on Monday vowed to leave the area peacefully. *Nash B. Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

GenSan gov't offers tax amnesty for higher revenue

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—In an effort to boost its revenue collection this year, the city government is granting tax amnesty to all delinquent real property owners, business operators and market stall occupants.

Mayor Pedro Acharon Jr. said the city government was expecting to earn P100 million out of this program.

The tax amnesty, granted through Ordinance 29 passed by the city council on Dec. 23, took effect Jan. 5 and will end Dec. 15 this year.

Through the ordinance, the city government practically condoned the penalties, interests and surcharges on all real property taxes, business taxes and market stall rentals as of Dec. 31, 2003 and prior years.

Acharon said from delinquent real property owners alone, the city has a total collectible of P100 million.

The amount, the mayor said, does not include collectibles from business taxes and market rental arrears amounting to millions of pesos.

He urged residents, particularly big establishments and real property owners, to avail now of the local government's tax amnesty program.

To avail of the program, real property owners, business operators and market stall occupants were advised to secure and fill up application forms available at the city treasurer's office.

Included in the ordinance was a guideline on how to avail of the program.

The guidelines provide that the applicants must pay in full all the basic taxes or stall rentals for fiscal year 2004 before interests, penalties and surcharges unpaid last year and previous years are condoned.

Delinquent real property taxpayers were required to pay 25 percent of the basic back taxes or P100,000 whichever is lower.

For business operators, they must pay 25 percent of the basic back taxes or P10,000 and for market stall occupants, P3,000 or 25 percent of the basic stall rental. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Solon pilloried for politicking turns tables on foes

A CONGRESSMAN accused of using the Southern Leyte landslide tragedy for politics yesterday came out to deny the accusations against him and turn the tables against his accusers.

Rep. Aniceto Saludo Jr. said he was instead a victim of a black propaganda campaign waged by his political opponents.

"Much as I refrained from getting any media reportage on what we have done from the start to help in alleviating the pain and suffering of my constituents, I am compelled to put on record what we have done to let the truth out," Saludo said in a press statement.

"When all the politicking and opportunism were allegedly committed and attributed to me, I was in Manila seeking assistance and coordinating relief efforts with national agencies and international groups with a ... team led by my daughter Met Saludo," he said.

He said the relief operations of his team started on Dec. 20 at 6 a.m. immediately after he got a report on the landslide tragedy at 4 a.m. from Mayor Diego Yuboc of San Francisco town.

He said his daughter quickly relayed his request for equipment to public works engineers.

He said he also rented more heavy equipment using his own money to help in the rescue of those trapped in mud and debris.

Volunteers were also tapped and provided with formalin to delay the decay of those who died in the disaster.

Saludo added that he also arranged for three warehouses and wholesalers in Sogod, Southern Leyte using his own funds to make available goods that are desperately needed by the families who survived the landslides.

On the alleged distribution of goods with his name stamped on them, he said these were meant for distribution during Christmas, a practice which he said he started in 1998.

The goods were diverted to the landslide victims.

"It would have been the height of stupidity to delay the distribution of such essential items just to remove the Christmas greeting cards with my name on them," said Saludo.

"Besides how could we have thought of or even found the time to remove these Christmas tags to save myself from unfounded charges of politicking, opportunism or lack of delicadeza?"

He also refuted reports that his wards blocked and interfered with the distribution of relief goods to the victims.

He said under the law, all government relief and assistance are given to the provincial disaster council which is under the control of the governor.

"How could we have delayed and even stuck my Christmas cards on these goods when we didn't touch them at all?"

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

After 9 years, fire victims still hoping for recovery

By Romulo Ponte
Calamba City

AFTER the fire on New Year's Eve nine years ago which turned to ashes the once bustling public market in Calamba City in Laguna, the life of affected businessmen and investors has turned from bad to worse.

This was how Auring Pamplona, 58, described the impact of the tragedy that razed all her four businesses—two canteens, a grocery store and a fruit stand.

"After that incident, our (family) economy has not recovered," Pamplona said. "What is disgusting is that the burned market, which was transformed into a multimillion-peso mall by the municipal government, has become a virtual ghost building.

"Almost nobody is investing there because the price of space rental is so expensive," she said. According to the affected former tenants, the minimum space rental is P100,000, which, they said, only big capitalists could afford.

The situation of a majority of about 1,000 big and small vendors that were displaced by the fire is hopeless, they said.

Pamplona, a teacher by profession, said her late husband Emilio did not hide his fury upon learning that some witnesses found gasoline spillover in the market site, indicating that the fire could have been started by arsonists.

Emilio, who was then president of the Parish Pastoral Council of the Holy Trinity based in Pansol, Calamba, was greatly affected by the tragedy which happened at a time when everyone should have been enjoying and celebrating New Year's Day of 1995.

Firecracker?

The fire took place at about lunch time of Dec. 31, 1994, purportedly caused by an exploding firecracker.

The market was full of stocks then. Customers busy with their buying sprees were caught unprepared when the fire struck.

But the worst had yet to come for the Pamplonas.

Emilio died of cancer on the anniversary of the market fire on Dec. 31, 1996.

Elias Alcantara, 56, a vendor since he was 5 years old, said he was forced to transfer to the temporary market in the Lecheria area after the municipal government promised to give the victims priority once the market was rebuilt so that they could recover their livelihood.

But the problem that haunts Alcantara and the hundreds of poor vendors like him who were displaced is how they can afford the minimum rental.

It also bothers Josefina Benigno, 53, a mother of six. Her family's only source of livelihood, a vegetable business worth P20,000, was reduced to ashes by the fire.

Benigno said she had been at the mercy of loan sharks.

The victims' plight starkly contrasts with recent developments in Calamba, which has attained cityhood status. Giant malls have sprouted near the highways, including the booming Trade Center Market.

For the hundreds of displaced small vendors and entrepreneurs, they still hope that the old market will rise again and help them recover their losses.

NO 'UNHOLY INTRUSION'

Banahaw villagers celebrate late Xmas of thanksgiving

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Tayabas, Quezon

FOR the 3,000 or so natives of the rustic village of Lalo at the foot of mystical Mt. Banahaw in Quezon, there are many things they have to be thankful to God for—the infinite natural bounties and the continued protection of the community, especially from "unholy intrusion" into the sacred mountain that is the source of their survival.

For one, village chieftain Prudencio Obispo said, they have been blessed with abundant water supply, coming from one of seven natural springs within their territory.

"That's why when several Japanese groups kept on coming back and continued with their diggings, left and right, near our water source in search of the fabled Japanese treasures, we immediately acted and stopped them," Obispo said.

Diggings

In July last year, a group was found digging in the upper slopes of the mountain, about 920 meters above sea level, near the Malagaylay Spring, the main source of Lalo's potable water.

The site is also near the Alitao River, which supplies water to irrigate rice terraces, locally known as "*hayhayan*," in the village.

The diggers felled several trees when they cleared the area. They used branches to set up their tents and quarters, and to reinforce the chain block and other digging and hauling equipment.

Ironically, barely a month before the illegal digging was discovered, President Macapagal-Arroyo issued Proclamation No. 411 declaring the Mt. Banahaw-San Cristobal a "protected area under the category of protected landscape."

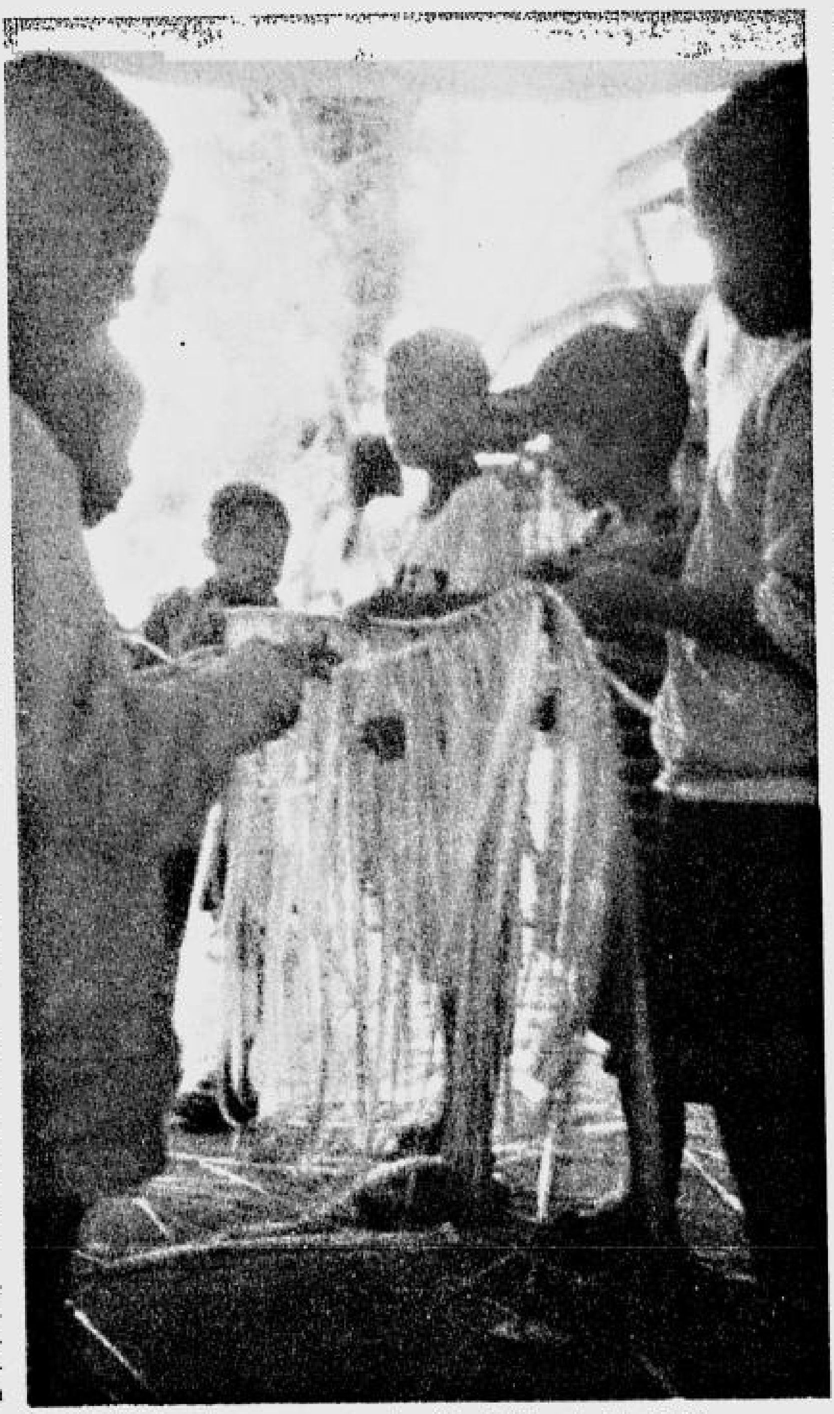
With the active participation of the environmentalist group Tanggol Kalikasan-Southern Tagalog, the villagers, led by Obispo and assisted by the local police, arrested the treasure hunters.

"It was the first arrest of illegal treasure hunters in the country on grounds of environmental destruction," said lawyer Asis Perez, area director of Tanggol Kalikasan.

Obispo said that if the diggings were not stopped, their water source could have risked contamination.

"Our water is one of our village treasures. We have already shown in the past how we defended it from outside intrusions," he said, referring to the "water wars" they had waged against the Quezon Metropolitan Water District (QMWD), which is based in Lucena City.

From 1995 to 2000, officials of Lalo and neighboring villages raised questions of who had legitimate rights over the springs around Banahaw. The QMWD had already been able to secure government permits to tap and utilize the water sources.



Children do their part in decorating the village hall for the late Christmas celebration.
DELFIN MALLARI JR.

After a protracted legal battle, the disposition of the still undisturbed water springs has been returned to the villages.

Reservoir

Lalo built a 12,000-gallon reservoir in the Malagaylay Spring. The main pipeline serves at least 300 of the total 596 households in the village. A flat rate of P20 a month is charged per household.

During a belated Christmas celebration held at the village hall on Dec. 28, a group of visitors that included Aileen Cavas, the reigning Ms Global Queen Philippines, environmentalists and journalists, could not help but express surprise at the refreshing natural sweetness of the water, which was served in "*bumbong*" or bamboo glass.

"Its refreshing taste is better than most of the bottled commercial water in the market," Russel Roales, news correspondent of a Manila-based tabloid, exclaimed.

Cavas urged the villagers to continue protecting their water. "You're all lucky here unlike most of the poor people in Metro Manila who could barely afford the cost of clean water," she said.

The water that flows from the Alitao River in the upper parts of the mountain irrigates the rice terraces—now a vanishing sight on the slopes of Banahaw in this part of Quezon. According to Tayabas historian Jun Redor, the Tayabas rice terraces were also built during the same period as the world famous Banaue rice terraces in Ifugao.

"Based on the studies of UP (University of the Philippines) anthropologist E. Arsenio Manuel, rice terraces were once the norm in rice planting from the Sierra Madre in northern Luzon up to the Bondoc Peninsula area in eastern Quezon," he said.

But when the Spaniards reached the shores and ruled the country, Redor said, the Spanish government issued a decree in 1600 ordering every family to plant at least 200 coconut trees to sustain their multifarious needs, from ship building to commodity trading.

"That was the period when the conversion of the rice terraces into coconut farmland started. That was one of the explanations why there are coconut plantations in the highlands when they are really best suited in the lowlands," Redor explained.

"The still existing rice terraces in Tayabas are now considered an important part of the town's rich culture. The villagers' duty is to protect them for the sake of the next generation," he said.

Franciscan missionaries Fray Juan de Placencia and Fray Diego de Oropesa established Tayabas town in 1578. From 1779 to 1910, it was the capital of the province, then called Tayabas.

The province was later renamed Quezon, with Lucena, formerly a village of Tayabas and now a bustling city, as the present capital.

Celebration

For their blessings from God, the Lalo villagers actually celebrate Christmas, not on Dec. 25 but three days later, to coincide with the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

According to Redor, the late Christmas celebration has been part of local tradition. On Christmas Day, Dec. 25, the villagers all troop down to the '*malaking bayan*' or '*poblacion*' to hear Mass and join the merrymaking with their urban-based relatives, he said.

"They spend the whole day far from home. So to make up for the lost time, they usually set aside a day after Christmas to celebrate it in their village with their relatives from the town as the visitors this time," Redor added.

But far from the gamely joke that most Filipinos play on innocent targets that has been associated with Niños Inocentes, the villagers spend the day reflecting on the blessings they received for the year and expressing gratitude to God.

Senior members of the community relived the old tradition of "*awitan*" (impromptu rendition of songs with self-composed philosophical lyrics) in-between swigs of "*lambanog*" (local coconut wine) drunk straight from improvised small bamboo glass.

The villagers said, however, they missed the taste of native deer and wild pigs that used to be served with the *lambanog*.

"These are now endangered species here in Mt. Banahaw. Although there are still some sightings, the villagers restrain themselves from catching the wild animals to let them reproduce for the next generation," Redor explained.

"The outside hunters are the ones to blame for the sorry state of the mountain wild animals," he added.

'Stinking' piggery too much for Batangas townsfolk

By Mei Magsino
San Jose, Batangas

ABOUT 200 residents of San Jose town in Batangas are protesting the alleged illegal operation of a foul-smelling piggery in Barangay Banay-Banay Uno and the "stinking" local government system that tolerated it despite a closure order and environmental violations.

The piggery, Alpha Farms, which is owned by Rolando and Emma Ona, was ordered closed by then Mayor Edgardo Umali in 1998, after being served a series of notices of environmental and waste-management violations.

Aside from its reported stench and the lack of sanitary permit, the piggery has been allegedly dumping its wastes into the Kay Utak Creek.

In a phone interview, Rolando Ona said that "we are not doing any illegal activities" and that the case is now being heard in court."

The protesters mounted a rally against the piggery's operations on Dec. 1 last year, but Ona said it was not proper as they were supposed to do it in a public place, not in his piggery. The street rally was actually held in front of the piggery.

"People should not hold a protest rally because it might affect the case," the owner said.

Ona refused to comment further on the controversy.

Resumption

The piggery stopped operations in 1998, but early this year, it resumed activities and was registered under the Barangay Micro Business Enterprise (BMBE) program being implemented by the Department of Trade and Industry.

"But the operation was not allowed by the local government or the barangay," claimed Leonardo Hernandez, Banay-Banay Uno barangay secretary.

"Since the Alpha piggery started operations, we've been smelling its foul stench that spreads to the whole barangay and even the nearby villages," he pointed out.

The barangay chair, Rene Alday, has refused to make a stand on the controversy.

The BMBE does not exempt any business entity from seeking permits from the local government.

The stench in San Jose, known as the egg basket of Luzon, is too much for the municipality that has long been trying to erase its title as the most smelly town in the province, the protesters said.

Emma Alday, president of the Sandiwa Cooperative, said the piggery had violated all the environmental conservation laws that the town has been trying to implement since the last decade. Sandiwa is based in San Jose with over 300 members.

"When most of the piggeries here closed because they couldn't comply with the environmental and waste management laws, the Alpha piggery operated despite the closure orders and its lack of permit," Alday said.

Closure order

Pushed by Sandiwa, San Jose Batangas Realty Development Corp., residents and the town council to make a stand against the illegal operation of the piggery, Mayor Ruben Guce finally issued an order to shut down the piggery.

"This piggery was issued a closure order, but the Onas were able to secure a temporary restraining order and even filed a civil case against the mayor," former Regional Trial Court Judge Ageleo de Villa said.

"And that is the reason we can smell that piggery's stench even from as far as the poblacion, where I live in my retirement house. That is already three kilometers away, but the stench is really bad."

On Sept. 1, a court in Batangas City granted the Onas a temporary restraining order that prevented the local government from implementing the closure order.

METRO

E-mail: pr_metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

FOUR DIGIT
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SUERTRES
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MEGALOTTO 6/45
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Mike Arroyo kin, 9 others die in mishaps

TEN PERSONS, including a nephew of First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, died in three separate vehicular accidents south of Metro Manila yesterday.

At 3:23 a.m., Christopher James Tuason, 29, of Valle Verde V, Pasig City, was heading toward Pasay when his Ford Lynx (XBB 699) rammed into a row of iron railings in front of the Metro Rail Transit Pasong Tamo Station.

The railings were put up by the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority on the approach of the southbound lane to separate vehicles going over the Magallanes Interchange and those turning right at Pasong Tamo.

Tuason, a son of Arroyo's first cousin, Severino Tuason, was also a godson of the First Gentleman.

Minutes later at 4:10 a.m., six persons were killed and 18 were seriously injured when a Barney Bus Liner (BXB 775) collided with a 10-wheeler Fuso cargo truck (UJZ 885) along the South Luzon Expressway (Slex) in Barangay Pulong Sta. Cruz, Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Calabarzon police director Chief Supt. Reynaldo Varilla, said the bus driver, Leonides Mariquina, lost control of the wheels of the vehicle along the northbound lane of the expressway.

The bus flipped over and skidded toward the opposite lane, where it was then rammed by the cargo truck.

It had been raining the night before and the police believed that it made the road slippery.

The Manila-bound bus had come from Guinyangan, Quezon.

Varilla identified the fatalities as Army Sgt. Joeben Sabadisto, Candido de Rosas, Maning Managa, Teodoro Enterna, Carlos Molina and an unidentified man.

Injured were John Flores, Crisanto Forte, Lilia Cuason, Ernesto Tario, Nelson Francia, Frederick Banago, Jadel Cajetas, Lawrence Sutito, Teofines Cuayson, Rodel Ensigne, Ernesto Mercado, Noemi Labatuan, Andy Velasco, Pastori Madamba, driver Mariquina and three unidentified persons.

The seriously injured were rushed to the San Jose Trauma Center in Calamba City.

In Tanyag, Lower Bicutan, a 5-vehicle accident at 4:20 a.m. resulted in the death of three women and the injury of 17 others.

According to the police, the Hyundai van from Lucena City driven by Edwin Tamondong was cruising along the northbound lane of the Slex when it was hit from behind by the 10-wheeler truck (DUW 167) driven by Bernado Dulay of JSI Trucking.

The impact forced the van to skid and veer to the left.

It then rammed the 60-kilo concrete center barriers that separate the northbound and the southbound lanes.

The concrete barriers flew onto the opposite lane and hit an oncoming Fuso truck (TCV 481).

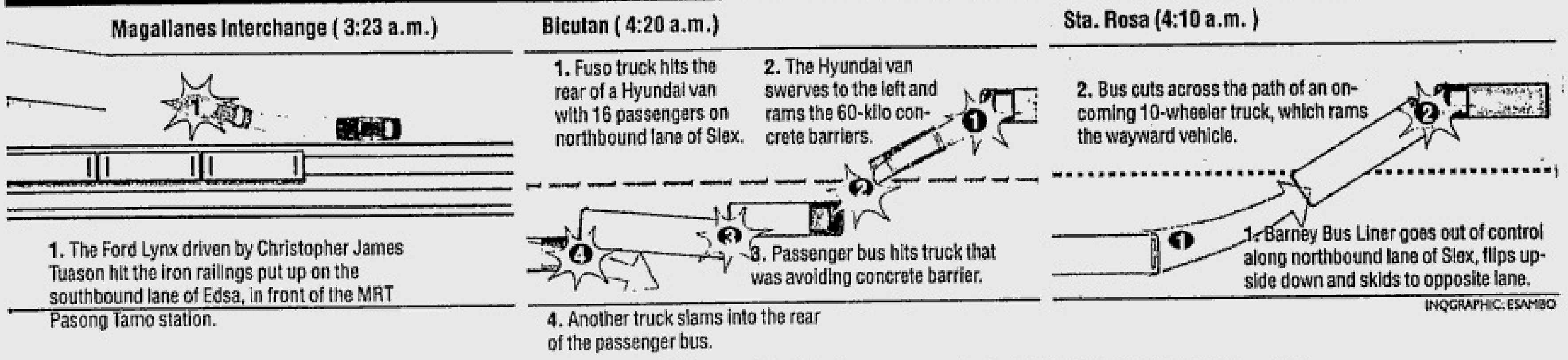
This led to a collision involving the Fuso truck, a 6-wheeler truck and a Golden Hi-Way passenger bus.

Ten of the 16 passengers of the L-300 van were brought to the Makati Medical Center, where the three fatalities were declared dead on arrival.

The three fatalities were unidentified as of press time.

The rest of the victims were taken to the South Super Highway Medical Center. *Marlon Ramos, Margaux Ortiz, Penny Rose Quiton, Tomnie Mae Susa and Beverly Casette Torralba*

DEADLY ROAD


Magallanes Interchange (3:23 a.m.)
1. The Ford Lynx driven by Christopher James Tuason hit the iron railings put up on the southbound lane of Edsa, in front of the MRT Pasong Tamo station.
Bicutan (4:20 a.m.)
1. Fuso truck hits the rear of a Hyundai van with 16 passengers on northbound lane of Slex.
2. The Hyundai van swerves to the left and rams the 60-kilo concrete barriers.
3. Passenger bus hits truck that was avoiding concrete barrier.
4. Another truck slams into the rear of the passenger bus.
Sta. Rosa (4:10 a.m.)
1. Barney Bus Liner goes out of control along northbound lane of Slex, flips upside down and skids to opposite lane.
2. Bus cuts across the path of an oncoming 10-wheeler truck, which rams the wayward vehicle.

INQGRAPHIC: ESAMBO

More cops up for promotion, says Napolcom

THE NATIONAL Police Commission yesterday clarified that its recent announcement of the meritorious promotion of 1,424 policemen involved in the May 1, 2001 siege "was only an initial list."

Napolcom spokesperson Director Bernardo Calibo said that the commission has to thoroughly check the list after learning from Western Police District officials and other sources that some lawmen who do not deserve to be promoted are included in the recommendation.

"The 1,425 policemen who were approved for special promotion were the first to be properly verified," Calibo said.

He added that the next batch for promotion would be announced soon.

"WPD cops could still rejoice because this is only the first list," Calibo said, stressing that the Napolcom exists for the good of the national police. *Margaux Ortiz*

Ping Lacson at GMA 7

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

I WATCHED Tuesday night the end part of the new program, Bio-Data, at GMA 7 that featured Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson.

He was very good at answering accusations about his hidden wealth. And he could answer with a straight face.

But the reporter and program host, Vicky Morales, did a splendid job of digging up some of the senator's skeletons in the closet. Like the house in Ayala, Alabang. Up until Tuesday night, nobody could pinpoint the exact location of Lacson's house in the multi-millionaires' village. People only knew about his house at BF Homes in Parañaque.

Bio-Data said the Alabang house is now for sale.

The well-researched report also said that Lacson had five houses in California. But the senator said that he only owned one, the one in San Diego, and he had already sold it. The house he admitted to owning was bought in the 1990s when he was not yet the chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP). Where did the money to buy that come from?

The bank accounts in the United States, the senator said, were blown out of proportion by his critics. He said that if his critics could prove that he still had accounts in the US banks, then they could have them.

Vicky Morales also mentioned that Lacson had shares in at least three companies registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). These firms, according to Morales, were not listed in the senator's statements of assets and liabilities (SAL).

But Lacson, in so many words and without batting an eyelash, said that he had divested in those companies.

The program also featured this writer, one of the arch critics of the senator. He admits we were close friends before. But he said that I started criticizing him when he cut my "P250,000 payola" from the PNP.

I hate to repeat the denial, since I've explained it also in the same program and other forums. But I feel I have to disabuse the minds of my readers, friends and foes alike.

I was a defender of Ping Lacson the whole time he was PNP chief. I only started bearing down on him after I learned that his men at the Presidential Anti-Organized Task Force (PAOCTF) were responsible for the abduction and murder of PR man Bubby Dacer and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito.

Besides, the payola was not a monthly payola but payment for the "infomercial" about the PNP in my TV program, "Isumbong mo kay Tulfo." Isumbong's production outfit, On Target Media Concepts, had a contract with the PNP years before Lacson became its chief. Under the contract, the show would feature heroism of some cops on a portion entitled "Yan ang Pulis (That's the cop)." In return, the PNP would pay the program P100,000 per episode that "Yan ang Pulis" would be shown. "Yan ang Pulis" ran for several months. The contract was terminated long before Lacson became PNP chief.

Where Lacson got the P250,000 figure, only he knows. He twists facts the same way he invents a scenario like the supposed Kuratong Baleleng shootout.

Minutes after the Bio-Data show at GMA 7 Tuesday night, I received a text message from Mary Ong, a.k.a. Rosebud, a principal witness against the senator on his alleged kidnapping and drug trafficking activities.

"*Parang* promotion for him, *at mga contrabida tayo*. I even allowed them (Bio-Data) to shoot how I live in ISAFP (Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces) quarters for four yrs. *Parang ako pa ang nakakulong. Si* Lacson living in comfort. Ping said again u extorted P250thou monthly payola," Ong said.

I texted Mary back: "He knows how to twist a story. Ok *lang*. We r telling d truth. D truth shall set us free."

I pity Ping Lacson because he's a prisoner of his own lies.

* * *

Oh, my goodness! We shouldn't have reported the quarantine of 38 people in Luisiana, Laguna, after they were supposed to have had contact with a 42-year-old woman.

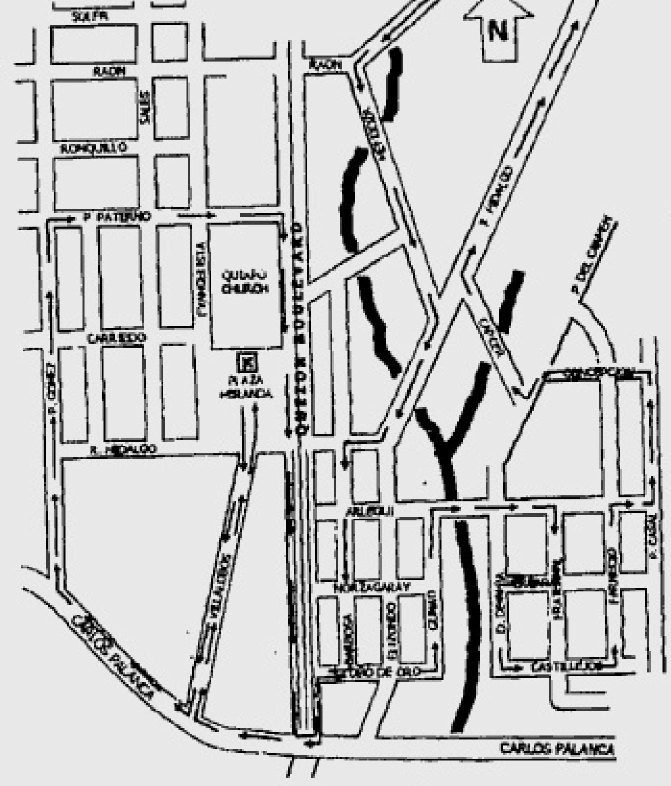
The woman, identified only as M.D., a former domestic helper in Hong Kong, is suspected of having Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

But the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Manila said her contracting SARS was remote.

Now, people are panicking again because of that report.

We could have waited until the suspicion that the woman had SARS was verified. What if the woman only had ordinary flu, which is common at this time of the year?

BLACK NAZARENE PROCESSION ROUTE



Traffic rerouted to give way to Black Nazarene

By Leila Salaverria

VEHICULAR traffic in Manila on Friday will be re-routed for the commemoration of the feast of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo, Manila.

According to the Western Police District Traffic Bureau, public utility jeepneys coming from España bound for Quiapo and Taft Avenue will be diverted to Rizal Avenue via Catalina and Fugoso Streets, crossing south to MacArthur Bridge. Others will be made to turn left toward N. Reyes Street, then turn right on C.M. Recto Avenue before making a U-turn at Evangelista.

Those coming from Dimasalang and Andalucia Streets will also have to take Rizal Ave. toward MacArthur Bridge.

Vehicles plying the Quiapo Ilalim route will still be allowed to use the southbound lane of Quezon Boulevard. But they will be made to go on toward Quezon Bridge before they can make a U-turn at the corner of Palacio and P. Burgos Streets.

Jeepneys from Legarda going to Hidalgo and C. Palanca Streets will be made to turn right at San Rafael Street, left at Nepomuceno Street, and left at Legarda.

Those coming from S.H. Loyola bound for Quiapo will be made to turn left at C.M. Recto Ave. toward Legarda.

Vehicles from Divisoria going to Quiapo should make a U-turn at N. Reyes Street.

Estero Cegado Street will be closed to traffic.

*Public utility buses coming from the south will be made to take the Jones flyover and then right in front of the Philippine Postal Corporation. Those going toward the Quezon Bridge will be made to turn right at Hospital Street and then right at Villegas.

To be closed to traffic for the Black Nazarene procession are Espana-Cataluna, East Espana-N. Reyes, South Andalucia-Fugoso, Isetan Service Road-C.M. Recto, Raon-Quezon Boulevard and the eastward openings along the Northbound lane of Quezon Boulevard. These will be declared no parking and tow-away zones throughout the event.

ANDREAS Sumagpao

Andreas needs liver transplant

ANDREAS Manuel C. Sumagpao, 10 months, is suffering from biliary atresia, a rare disease where his liver loses the use of its bile ducts. As a result, the bile builds up in the organ, destroying his liver.

Sumagpao has undergone an operation where his doctor took a part of his small intestine and attached it to his liver so that bile could flow from it. Unfortunately, the operation did not work. The boy's only hope now lies in a liver transplant, which costs P2.5 million.

His parents, Allen and Malou, can not afford the cost of a transplant. They are appealing to kindhearted readers for donations.

You can send your donation to Metrobank, Alabang branch under account name ITF Andreas Manuel C. Sumagpao, account number 051-3-051234163, or you may contact the parents at telephone number (632) 770-1643, or cellular phone (0917) 630-5934. They live at 69 Crispin Street Extension, Rizal Village, Alabang, Muntinlupa.

You may also call LIFT-BABIES Foundation Inc. at (632) 824-4621 or (0918) 926-3237.

METROBRIEFS

Drug man rescued

THREE drug suspects, including a 13-year-old boy, on Tuesday were arrested in Caloocan for allegedly kidnapping Jamail Banto, 26. Abdullah Abedin alias Ustadz, 40, Badrodin Makauyag, 28, and the boy, all residents of Bagong Silang, Caloocan, allegedly held Banto for ransom after he failed to return the suspects' money. On Dec. 25, the suspects gave Banto P120,000 with which to buy shabu, according to the National Bureau of Investigation. But the suspects did not like the quality of the shabu Banto had purchased. The suspects then threatened Banto and held him until the victim's family could return the drug money. NBI agents, and members of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Caloocan police rounded up the suspects after Banto's relatives sought the help of authorities. *Leila Salaverria, Edson Tandoc Jr.*

3 robbers nailed

P01 MANUEL Liazon on Tuesday night fought off four jeepney robbers, wounding two of them in the scuffle in Marikina City. Liazon, of Marikina's Precinct 11, was on board a passenger jeepney when the suspects, armed with a gun and knife, got on the vehicle along E. Rodriguez Street, Barangay Sto. Nino and declared a robbery at around 8 p.m. When one of the passengers refused to give her handbag, Liazon drew his gun and shot suspects Vicente Banzo and Christoper Togolo, 23, police said. A third man, Marlon Trilanez, 21, was later arrested in Barangay Concepcion Dos. The fourth, Raymar Raymundo, is still at large. *Luige del Puerto*

2 minors shot

THREE men and a woman on board a Toyota Rav 4 and a Honda CRV yesterday morning shot and wounded two minors in Mandaluyong City. Police said the victims were brothers, aged 16 and 17. They were on their way home on Rev. Aglipay Street when the suspects on their vehicles pulled over. A man in a long-sleeve shirt got off one of the vehicles, hurled stones at the victims and kicked the younger kid. Then he pulled out a 9-mm Glock pistol and shot the hands of both victims, police said. The brothers told the police they have never seen the suspects before. "We believe they're just rich kids who had randomly picked on the victims," P01 Edmund Fabella said. *Luige del Puerto*

Thief collared

A SHARP Metro Rail Transit commuter on Tuesday managed to collar a suspected thief in Mandaluyong City. Estequio Estilla was travelling Southbound on Edsa when he spotted Ernesto Brazil, 32, of Montalban, Rizal, trying to get near him at around 7 a.m. Estilla, who was with coworker Porferio Baguio at the time, told police that he felt something was wrong when he saw Brazil quickly exiting the MRT carriage on Ortigas Station. Estilla jammed the MRT doors open, checked their belongings and, when he learned that Baguio's cell phone was missing, quickly chased the suspect. MRT guards caught Brazil and found Baguio's phone in the suspect's pocket. *Luige del Puerto*

Man sets fire to police station

THE DESK officer was on the telephone. The other policemen at the investigation division of the Caloocan Police Station were on their desks. It was business as usual until the officers saw smoke coming out of the unit's detention cell.

At about 10 a.m. yesterday, Panfilo Ilagan, 28, allegedly set fire to his pillow. The cartons inside the detention cell also caught fire.

When the lawmen rushed to the cell, carrying pails of water, Ilagan hit the officers with an electric wire, PO3 Renato Ablaza Jr. said.

Lawmen had to subdue Ilagan, who was shouting, "*matakot kayo sa Diyos* (Be fearful of God)," Ablaza said.

Ilagan, of Sariraya, Quezon, is in jail for breaking the window of the taxi he was riding in. But the taxi driver had decided not to press charges, and lawmen was set to release Ilagan yesterday morning.

Ilagan is now detained at the Caloocan City Jail for charges of attempted arson. *Edson Tandoc Jr.*

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SPORTS TV

Compiled by L. Manguiat

BASKETBALL: NBA Greatest Games - 1987 All-Star Game; 8:30 a.m.; Solar Sports - See hometown hero Tom Chambers save the day for the Western All-Stars in Seattle.

NBA - Kings vs Sonics; 11 a.m. (r - 10 p.m.); Solar Sports; Rockets vs Pistons; 7 p.m.; IBC 13 - Pacific Division rivals Sacramento and Seattle tangle while Houston visits the Palace of Auburn Hills to take on Detroit.

TENNIS: Davis Cup Finals, Day 1; 2 p.m.; Solar Sports - It's Australia against Spain as Leyton Hewitt battles Juan Carlos Ferrero.

Tata Open, 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m., Star Sports - The battle heats up in India.

Schedules subject to change without prior notice.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Teeners pose big threat to veterans /A20

Sprewell leads Wolves past LA Lakers /A22

ATHLETES' BIG NIGHT

All set for PSA Annual Awards

THE STAGE is set for the Philippine Sportswriters Association (PSA) Annual Awards Night, a two-hour show honoring the biggest sports achievers in the year just ended.

"Friday will be a big night for the athletes, for the guests, for all of us who love sports. And the sportswriting fraternity is proud and honored to share the evening with them," said PSA president Roberto Cuevas of the Manila Standard.

Staged annually to recognize the Filipino athletes' big achievements here and abroad, the affair will be held tomorrow night at the Manila Pavilion with no less than the country's top sports supporters—President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo—expected to attend.

Three years ago, the Chief Executive graced the PSA rites, presenting the top award shared by billiards king Efren "Bata" Reyes and Fil-American golfer Dorothy Delasin.

PACQUIAO

SUAREZ

Pro boxer Manny Pacquiao and bowler Christian Jan Suarez head the long line of honorees as Athletes of the Year, their reward for contributing the biggest achievements that helped make year 2003 a big one for local sports.

Other outstanding athletes, including the 48 gold medalists in the last 22nd Southeast Asian Games, entities and friends of sports who did their share will also be feted in the program to be hosted by amateur cager Alex Compton and Lala Roque.

For the 10th straight year, Red Bull and Agfa Colors will sponsor the awards rites with support coming from San Miguel Corp., Philippine Sports Commission, Philippine Olympic Committee and Manila Mayor Lito Atienza.

"We're glad that our friends specially Red Bull and Agfa Colors are always around when needed. We would like to thank them and the others who helped make this modest undertaking of ours a reality," said Cuevas.

ALL/A21

Reavis holds key to 8 Tigers' fate

By June Navarro

RAFI Reavis holds the key to the fate of the eight Coca-Cola Tigers with expired contracts.

Coach Chot Reyes yesterday said getting Reavis to agree to a new deal is the team's priority before negotiations are held to re-sign other players and any rookie he would pick on Draft day.

Reavis, a power forward-center who was a key

REAVIS/A21

PBL games today /A23

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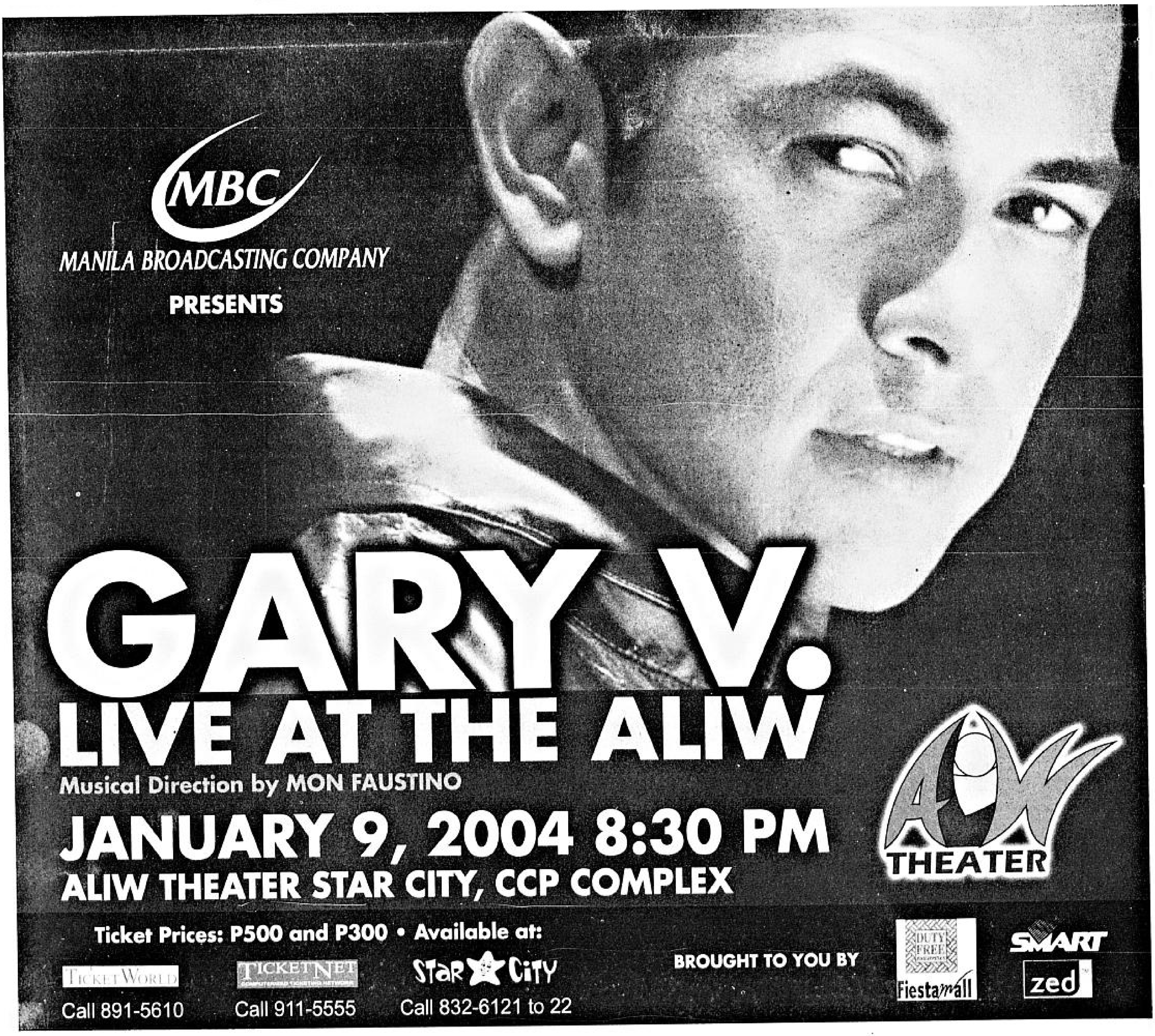

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AGOJO: Out to make up for last year's championship defeat. PDI PHOTO

LADIES OPEN

Teeners pose big threat to veterans

By Jong Arcano

JAYVIE Agojo and Remijin Camping, teenage aces in full bloom, are out to give the veterans a big fight when the 42nd edition of the Philippine Ladies Open golf championship unfolds at the Manila Golf Club course on Jan. 13-16.

Jungolf star Agojo, 17, will try to make up for last year's disappointment of losing tó Heidi Chua in a thrilling sudden-death playoff while 16-year-old Camping will be showing up with her best form in years.

They will be challenged by players from Australia, Taiwan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore, England and the United States.

Hong Kong is said to be sending over its national team while the squads from Indonesia and Taiwan are touted to be made up of single-digit handicappers.

Leading the veterans in the field are former champion and many-time national player Carmellete Villaroman, Lora Roberto and Tracy Locsin, all of Southwoods, and Lina de Guzman of Canlubang.

Villaroman and Roberto were teammates in The Spirit International held in Houston, Texas, last year.

Chua, winner the past two years, is no longer eligible to play after she tried out for the Futures Tour in the US where she made it as a first reserve.

Tournament sponsors include the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the First Gentleman Foundation, Golden Donuts, Rep. Gilberto Duavit, Equitable-PCI Bank, Slazenger, Nike Park and Crucible Gallery.

Swinging ladies from Southwoods, Navy, Villamor, Canlubang, Forest Hills, Wack Wack, Manila Golf, Aguinaldo, Sta. Elena and Orchard are out to dispute the crown in the lower divisions.

Agojo threw away her gallant bid for last year's crown when she three-putted the 18th hole against a two-putt par by Chua.

Superal shoots 68, leads by 2

CRYSTAL Superal rode two eagles and seven birdies to a four-under-par 68 for a two-stroke lead in the girls 12 years and under division of the Samsung Philippine International Junior Championship at the Wack Wack east-course.

Superal, daughter of a teaching pro, opened up a slim lead over Thailand's Phuntmabamrung Panpak with Hong Kong's Demi Mark three shots behind.

Superal, steady off the tee with a 3-wood her father Wendy gifted him on the eve of the event, could have pulled away if not for a triple-bogey and three bogeys during the round.

Teng Kao of Taiwan, 9, came up with a 73 to pace the boys' 10 and under division with Hong Kong's Tiger Lee, 7, taking second place.

Matthew Manotoc, the lanky, long-hitting 15-year-old bet from the Philippines, struggled with a 90 but still kept the top spot in Division II of the boys' Class A.

The four-day event has Samsung as title sponsor. Other backers are Cebu Pacific, Pagcor, Pacsports, Morella Tours, Herma Group of Companies, San Miguel Corporation; Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., Toyota Otis, Philippine Flour Mills, Gilberto Duavit, Takanobu Taira, Airlift Asia Inc., Raul Jorge, Sysu International, Holiday Inn Galleria Manila, Triplex Tent and Golf Gallery.

The Philippines' Paolo Garcia struggled with a 90 but it was enough to keep the lead in the special division with a 170. A duel looms with his brother Frederick, who made an 83 to be at 171.

Hong Kong's Alvin Cheung carded an 85 to go with his earlier 89 to wrest the Division I lead in Class B with 174.

Cebu's Johnvic Cogal shot an 83 and teammate Edsel Tan scored a 92 to share second place with the Philippines' Carlos Fabregas, who made a 91 to be at 175.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Torre agrees as Paragua's trainer

By Roy Luarca

GRANDMASTER Eugene Torre will be IM Mark Paragua's second/trainer for this year's World Chess Championships.

This was confirmed to the INQUIRER by lawyer Sammy Estimo, secretary general of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines, who facilitated the meeting between Torre and engineer Ric Paragua, Mark's father, yesterday.

The 52-year-old Torre, Asia's first GM, is expected to provide temperament and experience to Paragua, who is bidding to become the country's fifth and youngest GM at 19, when the knockout Fide (World Chess Federation) tournament is held.

TORRE

PARAGUA

The 128-man world chess championships is tentatively set in Tripoli, Libya, and Baku, Azerbaijan, in July at the latést.

Indon GM Utut Adianto, individual titlist in standard chess in the 22nd Vietnam Southeast Asian Games, had earlier asked for Torre's services for the world championships, but would be turned down with the Paragua offer.

Asian 3.2a zonal champion IM Ronald Dableo, the country's other world championship bet, would have GM Bong Villamayor as his second/ trainer. Also joining the team is computer expert Bobby Ang.

Torre was also hired as second/ trainer of his best friend and legendary world champion Robert James "Bobby" Fisher in the 1992 Fisher-(Boris) Spassky rematch in Yugoslavia which was won by Fisher. *With a report from NM Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Mia writes

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

"CAN I have your fax number, please?" said the lady on the phone.

"Who is this, please?"

"This is the secretary of Ms Mia A. Concio, the NBN chairman," she said. "She has a letter for you. Can I fax it now?"

"Sure."

Ms Concio's unexpurgated letter:

"Dear Mr. Mendoza,

"Anent your column of 3 January 2004, titled 'Boos & Best,' we wish to clarify certain points which you may have inadvertently omitted.

"Your comments—while they were understandable—were, to say the least, regrettably unfair, coming as they did from a veteran newshound.

"That nonetheless, we wish to underline that NBN was part of a consortium, which included IBC-13 and Summit Sports World Corporation. As such, we take exception to your singling out NBN in the said column.

"We wish to state that towards the end of the PBA's 3rd Conference, IBC-13 stopped airing the games while our partner Summit Sports failed in coming up with the necessary payments to the PBA. Inspite (sic) of this, NBN never wavered and honored its commitment to telecast the games using the Network's own resources.

"Perhaps it has escaped the memory of some friends that, in the past, NBN covered the PBA games while the other TV networks had opted out of such an undertaking.

"Incidentally, we wish to stress that there have been instances when the private media refused to cover some regional and international sports events for their own reasons. But NBN was there. Which hopefully should erase unfair thoughts that NBN at times unhealthily compete with private media.

"We do not deny the existence of arrears. In fact, we hold ourselves to it. However, we feel that this issue being sub judice should better be left to us and the PBA.

"We hope the clarification merits some space in your column.

"Finally, as we respect your opinion, we believe that if keeping one's word and honoring one's commitment merits one to turn out in your opinion as a laughing stock, then we wouldn't mind so much that the entire world shall laugh.

"Cheers to you,

"(Signed) MIA A. CONCIO"

***

Before I react to your reaction, Mia, let me first say that you will always merit space in my column. Now if you get nasty and consider me as almost as good as Sev Sarmenta, your top PBA sportscaster, I will object. For that's absolutely false. The truth is, Sev Sarmenta, as Taby Tabaniag loves to say, is so damn good he is almost as good as me.

That said, let me now deal with the points you raised in your letter.

You say my comments were understandable but were regrettably unfair.

I regret that you regretted having found my comments understandable but at the same time unfair. I am sorry. In the future, I promise to be fair and at the same time not understandable.

You say you take exception to my having singled out NBN when NBN was part of a consortium, which included IBC-13 and Summit Sports.

I apologize. And so to IBC-13 and Summit Sports, shame on you, too, for abandoning NBN. You are good-for-nothing pals. You also ought to fry in hell.

Tell me, Mia, who were those whom you said were your friends who have short memories? Shame on them, too. May they also fry in hell.

And who were those from the private media who refused to cover some regional and international sports events? I have to congratulate them, for they know how to run their business.

You say NBN had at times unhealthily competed with private media. Not exactly true. NBN had oftentimes, if not all of the time, competed with not only the private media but also with the private sector. Unhealthy, indeed, because the government's first duty is to encourage entrepreneurs to invest, not to discourage them by easing them out of business.

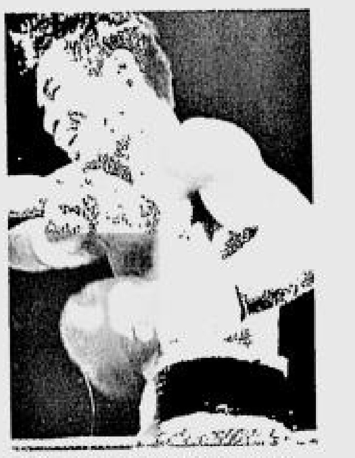
I like your frankness, Mia. The arrears, they may really be your albatross but there's unmitigated heroism in your act of admitting having accumulated them. And yes, I submit, I leave you and the PBA to settle the consortium's arrears to the tune of P165 million or so between you and the PBA. In the first place, I do not own a collection agency. Good luck.

Finally, thank you for saying you respect my opinion. I also respect yours. As proof, I buy your opinion that if the world wants to laugh at a monumental boo, let us all then laugh at the year's loudest boo: The flop of 2003 that was the consortium of NBN, IBC-13 and Summit Sports. After all, I'm sure that like me, you also believe in the saying laughter is the best medicine.

Let me end by saying cheers to you, too, Mia. I pray that God grant you peace and success in 2004. May He begin by giving back to you IBC-13 and Summit Sports.

IBF tells Pacquiao: Decide where to fight

Salven L. Lagumbay
Contributor



PACQUIAO: IBF ultimatum

THE INTERNATIONAL Boxing Federation has given Manny Pacquiao up to Jan. 16 to decide whether to remain as IBF super-bantam champion or campaign for the big money in the heavier featherweight division.

According to a report by BoxingTalk's Greg Leon, the IBF, based in East Orange, New Jersey, has ordered Pacquiao to enter into a purse bid with mandatory challenger Jose Luis Valbuena who, like Marco Antonio Barrera, is promoted by Oscar De la Hoya.

The report also added that should Pacquiao fail to enter into a purse bid and choose to fight another opponent, the IBF will strip him of his title while Valbuena will be forced to fight for the vacant throne against No. 2 Israel Vasquez, a constant Pacquiao sparmate at the Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

Pacquiao, acknowledged as the planet's finest featherweight today, is slated to leave for the United States middle of this month with business manager Rod Nazario to finalize deals for his next fight.

Pacquiao and Nazario are slated to meet with promoter Murad Muhammad and HBO top brass while in the US.

With his impressive win over Barrera last November, Pacquiao has become a hot commodity in the featherweight division.

Freddie Roach, Pacquiao's former American trainer, said the Filipino can easily command a $1.5 million purse for his next fight.

Football out of SEAG?

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FOOTBALL, table tennis, volleyball and badminton are likely to be left out when the Philippines eventually submits in March the sports disciplines it would include in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games.

In the initial meeting of the 2005 SEAG technical committee on Tuesday, several considerations were drafted to determine the 20 "priority sports" for the biennial meet.

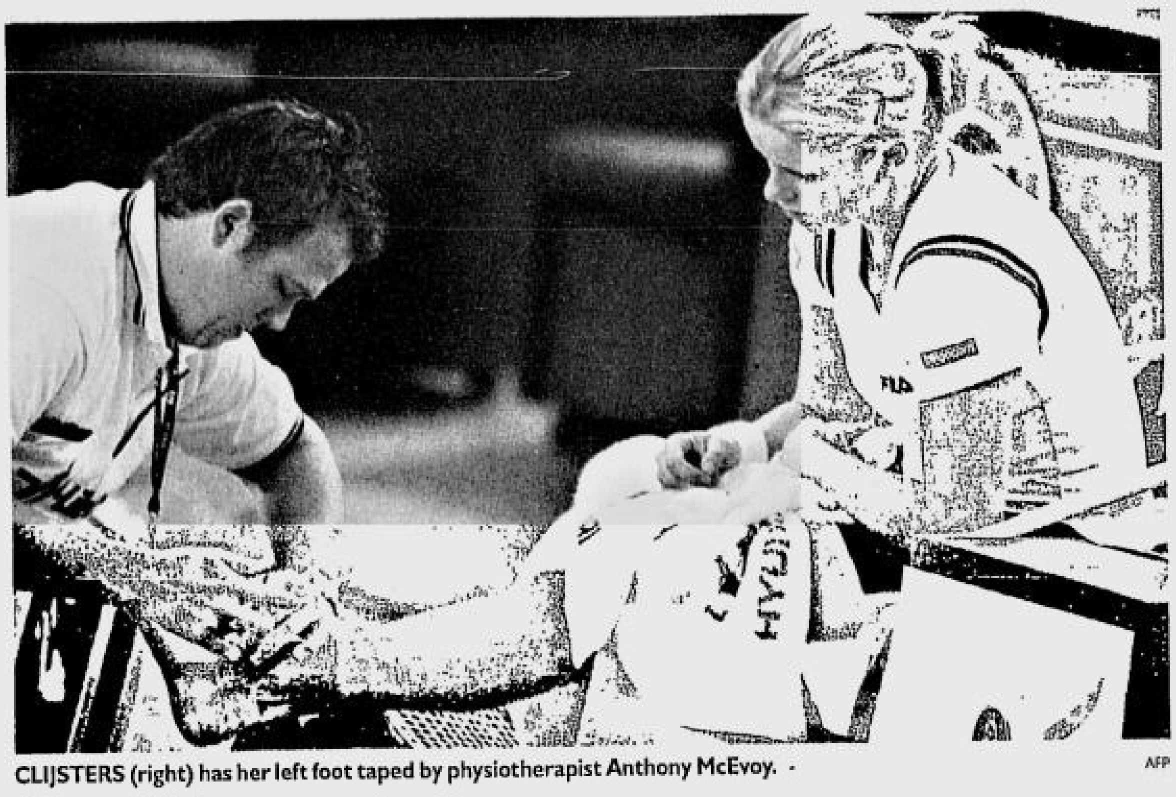
And popular as they are, the country has been left way behind in these sports among the 11 member-nations of the SEA Games Federation and would therefore be of no help in the Philippines' quest for the overall championship.

The foremost consideration according to the committee is the country's winning chances, which the members would base on the SEAG records dating back to 1991 when the country last hosted the Games.

The committee, led by former PSC commissioner Richie Garcia, added that the sport's popularity will take the back seat once the selection begins.

However, committee members said the three sports can still make it to the list because other countries will surely lobby hard for their inclusion.

The Philippines lobbied for the inclusion of marathon and boxing during the recent Vietnam SEAG but was unsuccessful in pushing for golf and bowling.



CLIJSTERS (right) has her left foot taped by physiotherapist Anthony McEvoy. AFP

HOPMAN CUP

Aussies whip Belgians as Clijsters retires hurt

PERTH, Australia—Kim Clijsters retired hurt with an apparent Achilles tendon injury from her Hopman Cup tennis match against Alicia Molik on Wednesday as Australia beat Belgium, 3-0.

Clijsters blew four match points in the second-set tiebreaker in the match won by Molik, 3-6, 7-6 (6), 2-3. The two were on serve in the deciding set and Molik was up 30-0 in her service game that would have leveled the set at 3-3 when Clijsters walked off the court.

Clijster's fiance, Australian Lleyton Hewitt, beat Belgium's Xavier Malisse, 3-6, 6-1, 6-2, in the following men's singles match to give Australia a winning lead. The mixed doubles was declared a walkover win for Australia because of Clijsters' injury.

Hewitt said Clijsters was upset that she had to retire from her match.

"I went and saw her, and she was obviously pretty distressed at the time," said Hewitt. "We weren't sure how bad it was, but it is obviously disappointing to happen a couple of weeks before a Grand Slam. Touch wood hopefully it is not as bad as it looked."

The Australian Open begins Jan. 19 in Melbourne.

The defending champion United States, which beat the Czech Republic on Tuesday, takes on France in a later Hopman Cup match Wednesday.

Hewitt had injury troubles of his own in the seventh game of the third set, needing to have his ankle taped after twisting it. *AP*

RODDICK: Good workout. AFP

Roddick off to fine start

DOHA—World number one Andy Roddick comfortably won his first match of the season on Tuesday, beating Russia's Nikolay Davydenko, 6-3, 6-4, in 67 minutes at the Qatar Open.

"It was a good workout. It is always difficult to start after a break. But I would say it was a comfortable win for me," the 21-year-old US Open champion said.

The American will play the winner of the match between Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman and Czech Radek Stepanek in the second round.

Earlier, Moroccan sixth seed Younes El Aynaoui, champion here in 2002, lost to French wildcard Nicolas Escude, 6-3, 6-0. *Reuters*

Wimbledon roof

WIMBLEDON, England—As synonymous with Wimbledon as strawberries and cream, rain delays on Centre Court will soon be a tradition consigned to the past.

Finally, after years of dithering, the All England Club announced Tuesday that it plans to build a retractable roof.

Players and spectators still will have to endure rain delays for several more years, however. The club needs to get planning permission, work will not start for two years, and the roof will not be in place until 2009. *AP*

All set for PSA...

From page A19

To be shown on NBN 4 on a delayed basis, the affair will start at 7:30 p.m.

Cuevas said invitations to the honorees and guests, including the gold medalists in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam, have already been sent.

Tan Ho enters final

SECOND seed Joshua Tan Ho subdued fourth pick Ken Patrick Arevalo, 7-5, 7-6 (3), yesterday to enter the boys' 14-under final of the 15th Andrada Cup Age-Group Tennis Championships at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Tan Ho, carrying the colors of International School, will meet unseeded Japanese Tashiya Suzuki, a 6-0, 6-2 winner over Juan Carlo Pantua in the next round.

In the boys' 16-under class, second seed Raymond Villarete beat fifth seed El Santo Santos, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, to forge a semifinal duel with Japanese Katoh Taiki, who beat compatriot Kutsunugi Kyouhei, 6-0, 6-1. Other winners were Juv Alban and Japanese Jenji.

In the boys' 18-under category, seventh seed Arithmetico Lim clipped Japanese Kutsunugi Kyouhei, 6-1, 6-3, to join No. 1 Irwin de Guzman, No. 4 Nico Riego De Dios and unseeded Nestor Celestino Jr. in the semifinals of the event.

Meanwhile, girls' 18-under top seed Catherine Flores tripped Japanese Miho Ishida, 7-5, 6-0, to advance to the final against second seed Bien Zoleta, who clipped Japanese Naoko Ueshima, 1-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Reavis holds . . .

From page A19

player in Coca-Cola's victory over San Miguel in the Reinforced Conference last month, is set to arrive from his month-long vacation in the United States only on Jan. 19.

"We won't move on the other players until Reavis is signed up. We will pick it up from there," said Reyes, who will dip his hand in the rookie pool dead last in the first round (10th overall).

Eagerly waiting for the return of Reavis are Rob Wainwright, William Antonio, Freddie Abuda, Leo Avenido, Cris Bolado, Gec Chia and Gilbert Lao.

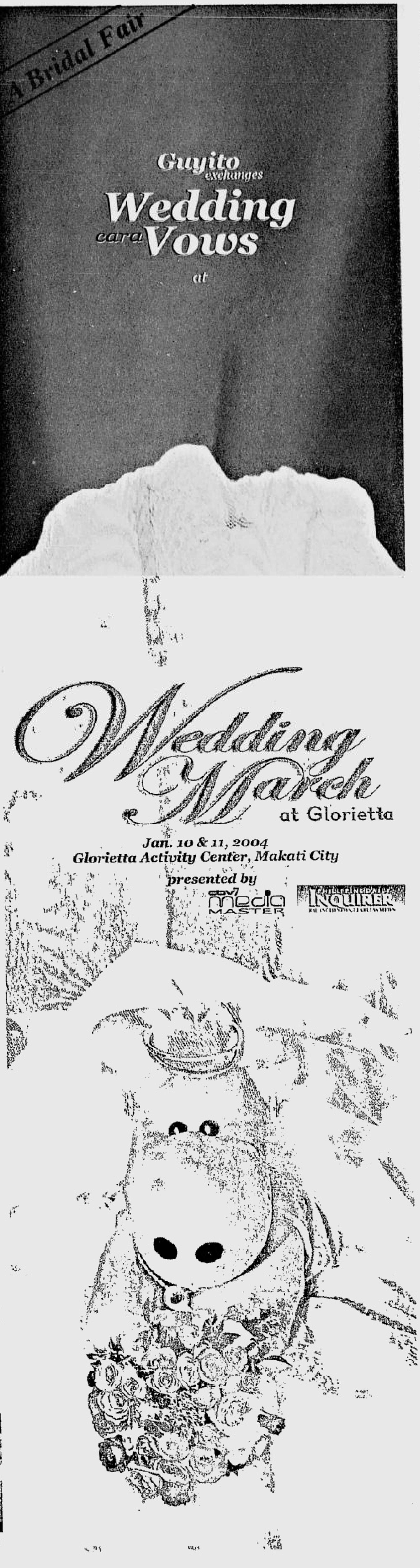
An INQUIRER source said Coca-Cola's negotiation with Reavis is expected to affect any new deal with the seven players. "It will all depend on what Reavis wants," he said.

Meanwhile, the PBA Commissioner's Office has asked Barangay Ginebra to deal Jun Limpot to other non-San Miguel Corporation teams first before giving him up to sister squad Purefoods for Andy Seigle.

If no other team snags the 6-foot-6 Limpot from the trading block, then PBA Commissioner Noli Eala would have to decide if the TJ Hotdogs should acquire the rights to the former De La Salle University slotman.

PBA rules prevent Purefoods and Barangay Ginebra, which are under the SMC umbrella, from directly swapping their players.

FRIENDSHIP MEET. Division winners of the inaugural Philippines-Japan Friendship tournament held recently at Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club course are joined by the other participants and officials of the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines and the Philippines-Japan Camaraderie Association. RP bets swept all eight division titles against their counterparts from Fukuoka, Japan.



A Bridal Fair
Guyito exchanges Wedding cara Vows at
Wedding March at Glorietta
Jan. 10 & 11, 2004
Glorietta Activity Center, Makati City
presented by
media MASTER
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Sprewell lifts Wolves past banged-up Lakers

MINNEAPOLIS—Latrell Sprewell scored 30 points while keeping Kobe Bryant in check, and the Minnesota Timberwolves sent the struggling and injury-plagued Los Angeles Lakers to a 106-90 loss Tuesday night.

Shaquille O'Neal sat out his second straight game with a strained right calf, and the Lakers have been missing Karl Malone for more than two weeks because of a sprained right knee.

"That's their problem," said Sam Cassell, who had 19 of his 26 points in the first half for the Wolves. "I've got my own problems in this locker room. We're not healthy either."

Los Angeles lost for the seventh time in 10 games, and Bryant had only six of his 20 points in the second half.

"I don't care who is playing," Sprewell said. "You have to go out and win regardless. We have injuries as well. That's just part of the game.

"It does make a difference, obviously, without Shaq and Karl in the game. But we'll take it. They still play hard."

Minnesota's two other stars gave Sprewell plenty of support. Kevin Garnett had 26 points and 18 rebounds.

In Clevelend, Stephon Marbury didn't do much for the new-look Knicks after being cleared to play just 30 minutes before tipoff, and LeBron James' 10 assists and Zydrunas Ilgauskas' 24 points led the Cavaliers over New York, 107-96.

Marbury, traded from Phoenix to New York along with Penny Hardaway a day earlier, had eight points and eight assists in the Knicks' third straight loss.

James had 14 points on a poor shooting night, but his assists tied his career high. Eric Williams hit baskets at several key points and finished with 22.

For much of the game, New York resembled a team that hadn't practiced together. Hardaway shot just 3-for-9 for six points. Keith Van Horn led New York with 20 points and Allan Houston had 18.

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Jason Kidd had his second straight 30-plus point game and Nets held Los Angeles to a season-low 28 first-half points with a 92-75 win.

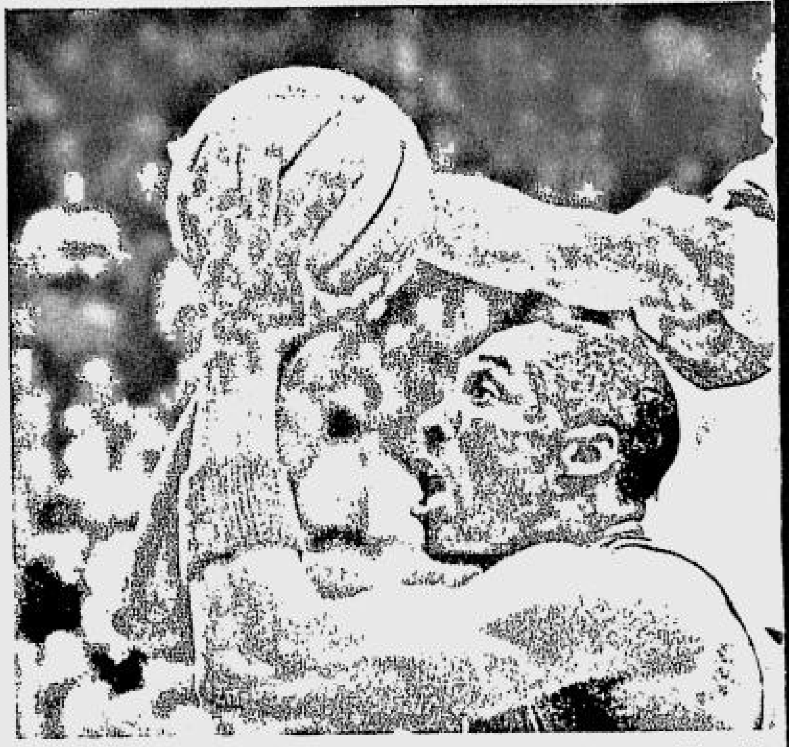
Kenyon Martin and Corey Maggette were ejected after exchanging punches in the third quarter, and both face automatic suspensions.

No one else was involved in the fracas, which detracted from a 32-point night by Kidd as he shot 13-of-20 from the field. The Nets gave an outstanding defensive effort in their 13th win in 16 games and fourth straight.

Meanwhile, Vin Baker's comeback from alcoholism hit a detour when he was suspended by the Boston Celtics for three games after the team was told he didn't comply with his treatment program.

NBA RESULTS

Cleveland 107, New York 96; Indiana 114, Orlando 107; New Jersey 92, LA Clippers 75; Minnesota 106, LA Lakers 90; San Antonio 94, Washington 72. *AP*



MINNESOTA's Trenton Hassell (center) blocks a shot by Bryant as Lakers' Kar

FRANCISCO Ferrer (left) spars with RP teammate Mark Melligen. RUDY ESPERAS

World-class Kazakhstan boxers here

By Dennis U. Eroa

THE WORLD-CLASS Kazakhstan boxing team arrived recently along with fighters from Korea, Sri Lanka and Qatar to vie for slots in the 22nd Asian Olympic Boxing qualifying on Jan. 10-18 at the Puerto Princesa City in Palawan.

And with the Kazakhs in the field, the battle for the 24 slots for the Athens Olympics has become tougher as ever.

"The arrival of the Kazakhs means one thing—the qualifying is going to be a world-class event," said Abap President Manny Lopez. "I'm sure Kazakhstan is fielding a very strong team in the tournament."

Kazakhstan became the toast of the boxing world when it won two gold and two silver medals in the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Two other former Russian republics are also expected to do well in the event—Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Thirty-eight more slots will be contested in two other qualifiers slated later this year in China and Pakistan to produce a total of 62 boxers that will represent Asia in the Olympics.

The Palawan tournament, easily the country's biggest, is sponsored by the Philippine Sports Commission, Accel, Revicon and Pacific Heights. It will be televised over NBN 4.

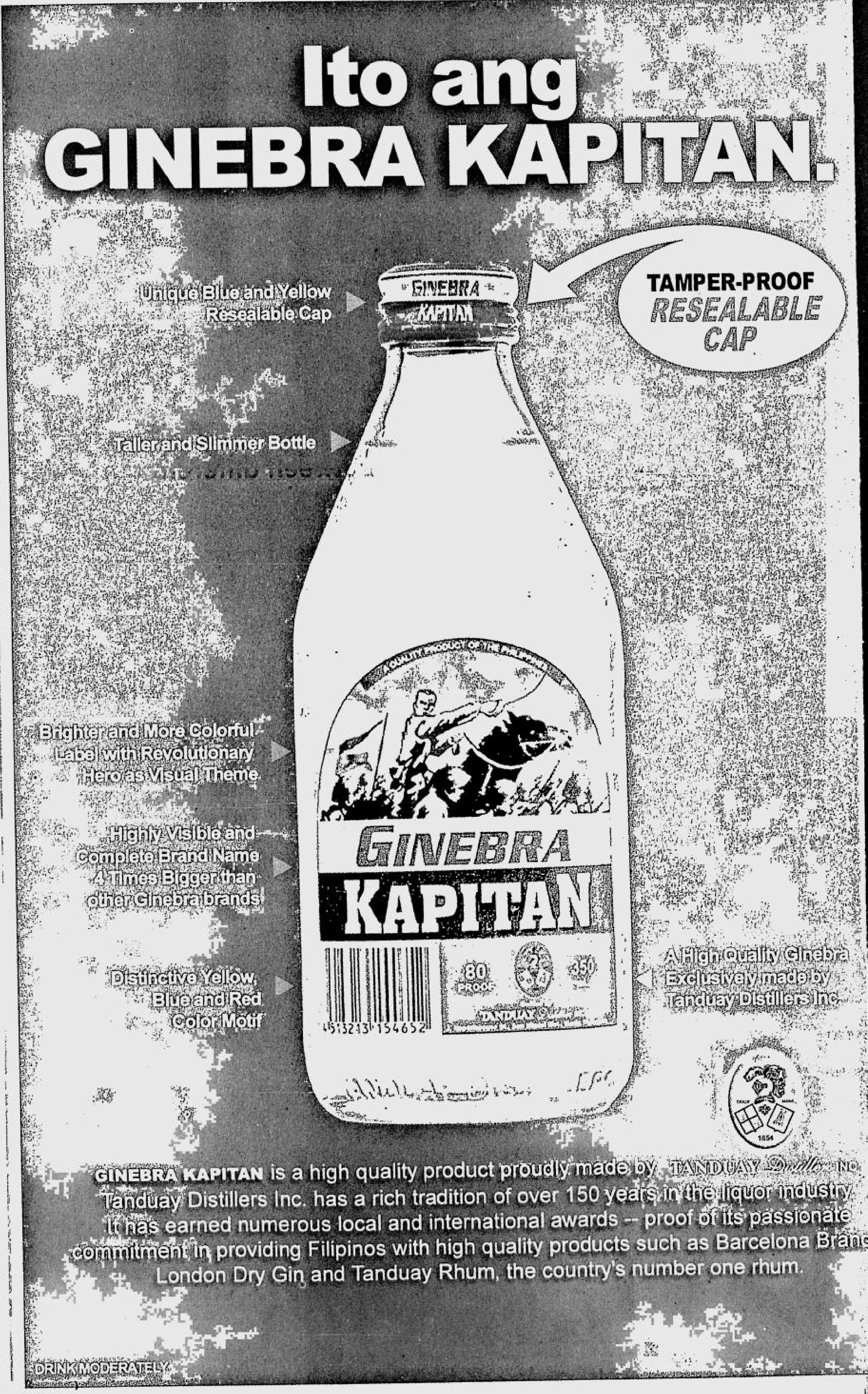
Palawan Gov. Joel T. Reyes and Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, who are joining forces to make the event a success, expressed elation on the arrival of the Kazakhs.

"Our local bets will experience a very stern test," said the two political leaders. "The tournament is truly going to be very memorable."

Another group of Kazakh fighters will arrive on Jan. 10 along with the teams from Thailand, Japan, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam and Turkmenistan. A second group of Korean bets are also planing in soon.

In the initial lineup submitted to the Abap, the Kazakhstan team includes Zhumabekov Zhandoz, Abutalipov Kanat, Serikbayev Berik, Behafarov Galib, Orakbayev Kanat, Artayev Bakhtiyar, Golovkin Gennadi, Shumenov Beibut, Storozhuk Pavel, Nurzhan Karymyzhanov, and Dildabekov Mahktarkhan.

Coaching the team is Ibraimov Yermakhan and Alexander Apachinski.



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Taller and Slimmer Bottle
Brighter and More Colorful Label with Revolutionary Hero as Visual Theme
Highly Visible and Complete Brand Name 4 Times Bigger than other Ginebra brands
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A High Quality Ginebra Exclusively made by Tanduay Distillers Inc.
GINEBRA KAPITAN
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DRINK MODERATELY

GINEBRA KAPITAN is a high quality product proudly made by TANDUAY Distillers INC. Tanduay Distillers Inc. has a rich tradition of over 150 years in the liquor industry. It has earned numerous local and international awards -- proof of its passionate commitment in providing Filipinos with high quality products such as Barcelona Brand London Dry Gin and Tanduay Rhum, the country's number one rhum.

eem Rush looks on. REUTERS

Yap, Alvarez lead talent-rich batch in PBA Rookie Camp

A DEEP and talent-rich rookie pool, one of the finest batches in years, will be on full display when the Philippine Basketball Association holds its second Rookie Camp on Sunday at the Quezon City Memorial Circle.

Top collegiate stars James Yap, Rich Alvarez and Paul Artadi lead 49 rookie prospects in displaying their skills before league coaches and fans in various drills to be supervised by multititled coach and camp director Norman Black.

The camp not only introduces the incoming rookies to fans, but more importantly, gives coaches and team owners a closer look at possible draftees ahead of the league's rookie draft on Jan. 16 at the Glorietta in Makati City.

"This event officially kicks off our 2004 season and what better way to do it than to showcase the future stars of the league," said Commissioner Noli Eala, who introduced the camp in his first season at the helm last year.

The Shell coaching staff should be the most interested spectators in the rookie camp. The Turbochargers own the top pick overall and they will have a big decision to make on draft day choosing among a host of prospects.

Among the top candidates are Yap, a prodigious gunner out of the University of the East, pointguard Paul Artadi and three big men who could fill Shell's frontline need, namely, Ranidel de Ocampo, Ervin Sotto and Alvarez.

Two talented prospects from the PBL—Marc Pingris and former MVP Gary David—as well as Ateneo standout Wesley Gonzales are expected to crowd their former teammates in the national team for the honor to be drafted in the first round.

FedEx, in the process of a major buildup, is another team hoping to make full use of the camp.

The Express own the third, fourth and ninth selections in the first round in a bid to boost their lineup with young, tall players who can make a ready impact in the team's third season in the league.

The camp kicks off promptly at 3 p.m. All the rookie applicants are requested to be at the camp venue by 12:30 p.m. to give Black the opportunity to orient the players on the drills to be performed.

Fash tackles La Salle; Blu meets Sunkist

STANDINGS	W	L
Welcoat	8	3
Sunkist-UST	7	4
Blu Star	7	4
Fash Liquid	5	5
Montana	5	6
Viva-FEU	4	7
ICTSI-La Salle	2	9

GAMES TODAY (UST gym)
1:45 p.m.—ICTSI vs Fash
4:00 p.m.—Blu Star vs Sunkist

FASH Liquid Detergent tries to boost its semifinal bid when it faces ousted ICTSI-La Salle even as early qualifiers Blu Star and Sunkist collide today in the PBL Platinum Cup at the UST gym.

The Liquid Power, at 5-5, is knocking at the semis doors but needs to win its last two games to make it worry-free to the next round over Montaña and Viva-FEU.

Fash coach Junel Baculi said he is confident his charges would be able to hurdle this challenge, considering the championship experience they've gained in winning last year's Unity Cup.

"I'm quite satisfied with the way my boys played against Montaña, but we have to exert more effort to win," said Baculi.

The Archers own a 68-66 win over the Liquid Power in their first meeting, but things are a lot different when they meet today at 1:45 p.m.

The Archers, with only two wins in 11 starts, are already out of contention and their ace, the 6-foot-2 Mac Cardona,is out of action with an injury. *Marc Anthony Reyes*

SPORTSWATCH

Roligon derby on

COCKERS from Laguna, Batangas, Pateros, Pasig and Taguig are the main protagonists in today's "Nagkarlan AUT 4-Cock Derby" at Roligon Mega Cockpit. Action starts at 7 p.m. Hosting the event is veteran cocker Dr. A Tuazon who will be assisted by pit manager Roming Vergara. All entries must be submitted before 2 p.m., according to Vergara. For other details, contact 833-2275 and 833-1638. Last Tuesday, Larry Amante's bet, Roligon 4-Cock Feb. 17, won the solo championship of the Eskrimador 4-Cock Derby after posting four straight victories. Meanwhile, Roligon's "14th Anniversary 7-Cock Derby," slated on Jan. 31, Feb. 3, 5, 7, 10 and 12, got a big boost yesterday with the early registration of some 60 entries with cockhouse reservations.

NCA tilt at Araneta

BIG-TIME cockfighting action resumes at the air-conditioned Araneta Coliseum this coming Monday and Wednesday, Jan. 12 and 14, via the NCA 7-Cock Derby to be hosted by longtime partners Rep. Rudy Albano and engineer Pico Berin. Participants are reminded to submit entries on Sunday, Jan. 11, from 4-9 p.m. at the Araneta Coliseum green gate. For additional details, call 911-3101 and 911-2928. The much-awaited World Slasher Cup 8-Cock International Derby will be held on Jan. 19, 21 and 23 with Big Dome owner Nene Araneta, Gov. Ito Ynares and Firefly Group as hosts. So far, 11 American cockers and breeders have confirmed their arrival to join this slambang confrontation of popular cockfight luminaries. They are Roger Roberts, Johnny Moore, the legendary Ray Alexander of Alabama, CD Moore, Hector Hernandez, Wilbert Lee Blanc, Richard Harris, Bobby Fairchild, Jimmy Cody, Jerry Douglas and Sam Caudle Jr.

Molitor to 'Hall'

NEW YORK—Paul Molitor and Dennis Eckersley were elected to baseball's Hall of Fame on Tuesday in their first year of eligibility. Molitor was picked on 431 of 506 ballots (85.2 percent) cast by reporters who have been members of the Baseball Writers' Association of America for 10 or more years. Eckersley was selected on 421 ballots (83.2 percent). To gain election, a player must be chosen by at least 75 percent of the voters (380). Molitor was with family and friends in Minneapolis when he got a telephone call with the good news. "There was a huge sigh of relief on my part," Molitor said. Second baseman Ryne Sandberg was third with 309 votes, 61.1 percent, up from 49.2 last year. He was followed by Jim Rice (276), Andre Dawson (253), Rich Gossage (206), Lee Smith (185) and Bert Blyleven (179). **AP**

RACING

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

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Race 4--1. Boss Abi 2. Better Strike 3. Golden Quest

Race 5--1. Zero Gravity 2. Stingray 3. Brenda Starr 4. Fine Offer 5. Bambino

Race 6--1. Bukambibig 2. Material Trick 3. Roppongi 4. Bold Lucky 5. Brainchild

Race 7--1. Western Dancer 2. Boys Town Kid 3. Mika's Special 4. Silver Place 5. Tenacity

Race 8--1. Jackpot 2. Sweet Inspiration 3. Rock's Dragon 4. Great Hill 5. Dynasouls

Race 9--1. Il Amorosa/Duces Tecum 2. Schwarzenegger 3. Little Sam 4. Red Rose 5. Maginoo's Pride 6. Golden Prince

CONSUMERS CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE.*

Survey shows that the current packaging of gin or ginebra products do not cause confusion in the market and consumers do not confuse one brand for another based on packaging when bottles are facing forward even from 4 to 5 feet away:

81% can identify or distinguish gin brands
88% can read the labels of gin brands
94% can identify the gin brand they want to purchase

RESULTS ARE CLEAR.
Consumers can tell the difference between different gin or ginebra brands based on their packaging. They rely not only on the label but also on other details or cues such as the kind and color of the bottle cap.

*Based on the survey conducted by AC Nielsen. Respondent Base: Males aged 18 to 55 from D E income homes who are past-4-week drinkers of gin; Total of 300 respondents from GMA and the rest of Luzon.

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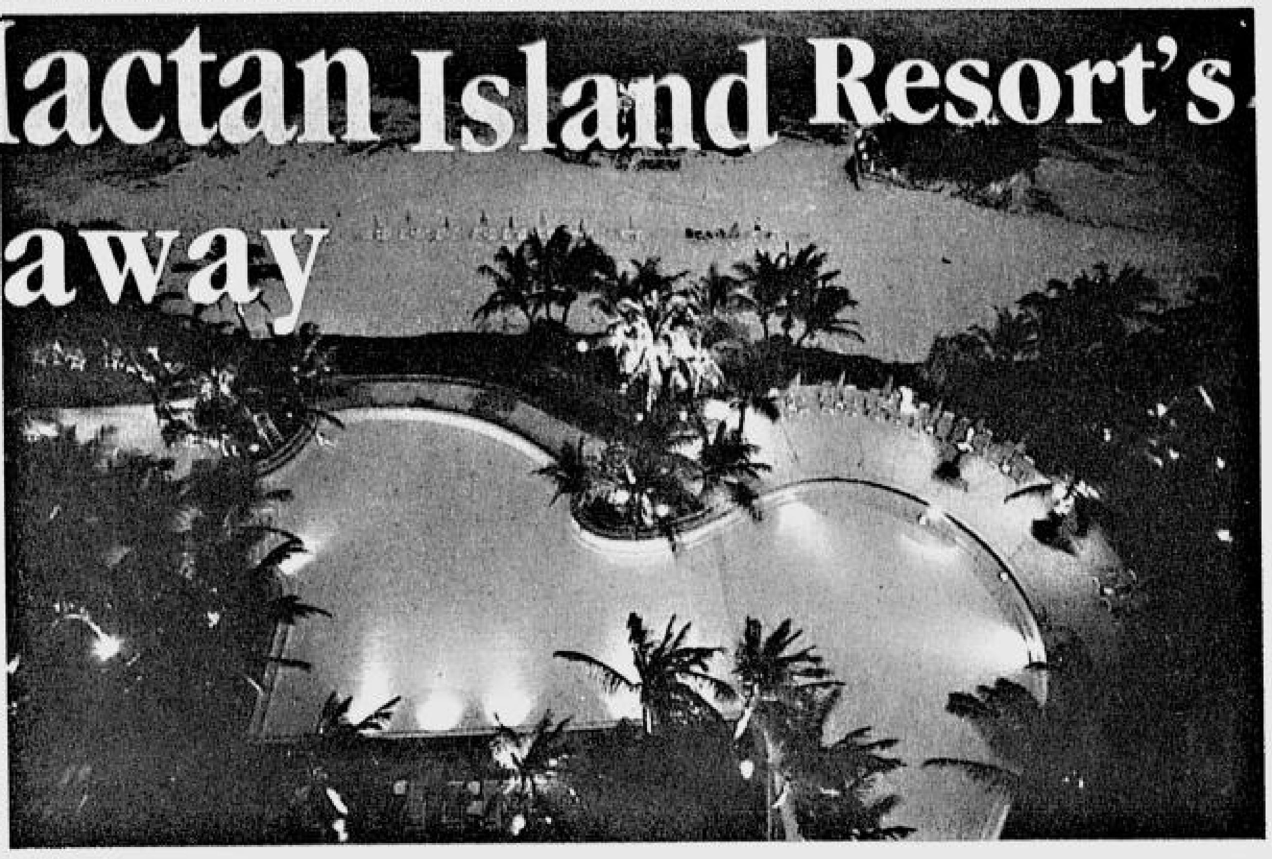
Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort's Sinulog getaway



Experience the country's grandest mardi gras—the Sinulog Festival on Sunday, Jan. 18, as Cebu gathers for the exotic and colorful tradition and to party all day long.

Sinulog is a dance ritual in honor of the miraculous image of the Santo Niño (Child Jesus). Historians say that Sinulog, which is of pagan origin, is the link between the country's past and it's Christian present. Historical accounts indicate that *sinulog* was already danced by natives to honor their pagan gods even before Ferdinand Magellan, the Portuguese navigator, came to Cebu in 1521. When Magellan introduced Christianity, one of his gifts to the newly converted ruler Rajah Humabon was a wooden image of the Santo Niño. Unfortunately however, shortly after the conversion, Magellan died in a fierce battle with Rajah Lapu-Lapu, another ruler he planned to convert.

It took another 44 years for another navigator, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, to finish the colonization of the whole island. In one of his conquests, one of his men found inside a burning house the image of the Santo Niño together with some wooden icons. Historians suggest that between the coming of Magellan and Legazpi, the natives continued to dance the *sinulog*. This time, they danced it no longer to worship their wooden icons but in reverence to the Santo Niño which is now enshrined at the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño in downtown Cebu.

Stay at Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort and be a part of this spectacular celebration. From $115 net for a superior gardenview room, enjoy accommodations for two adults inclusive of buffet breakfast for two at the Garden Patio and complimentary airport transfers. This package is valid until Jan. 20. For inquiries and reservations, call (032) 2310288.

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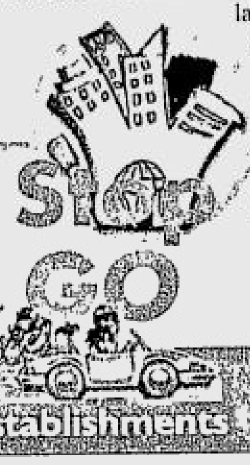

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Discover Liechtenstein cuisine at The Tivoli

FROM Jan. 10 to 18, The Tivoli, Mandarin Oriental's premier restaurant known for its new Asia-inspired cuisine, extensive wine collection and innovative food promotions, infuses its lunch and dinner menus with the culinary wonders of Liechtenstein in Central Europe, which is one of the smallest independent states in the world.

In his first visit to the country, guest Chef Rolf Berger of the renowned Torkel Restaurant in the Rhine Valley, a gastronomic Liechtenstein landmark that has earned two toques from the Gault Millau guide, introduces his famed Liechtenstein dishes to Manila's avid gastronomes. Built in the medieval century in Vaduz as a winery and converted into a restaurant in the late 1960s, The Torkel property is owned by the Prince of Liechtenstein. Royal family events such as weddings and birthdays were customarily held in Torkel Restaurant famous for its unique cuisine and covered summer terrace situated at the top of a vineyard.

Among Chef Berger's unique creations featured in The Tivoli's menus are fillet of brook char on *ramato* tomatoes in basil sauce; fillet of river perch in olive coat on champagne and grain mustard sauce; fillet of *rouget* in crisp potato coat served on sour cream sauce and sauce *verte*; pan-fried quail breast on mashed potatoes with sauerkraut and black truffle sauce; tournedos of veal tenderloin flavored with acacia honey in curry cream sauce; and for dessert, anise-flavored chocolate soup with pineapple and Ice orange and *mascarpone* parfait with cinnamon ice cream and rum-marinated fruits. Specialty wines from Austria, France, Italy, and Spain are also featured in the special menu.

The Liechtenstein food promotion places special emphasis on its fish dishes, having flown in an ample supply of brook chars and river perches, which are fresh water fishes from the domestic waters surrounding Torkel Restaurant.

Chef Berger's long-time colleague, Chef Gilles Cavalieri and The Tivoli's chefs will assist him during the promotion. A member of the exclusive Eurotoques society, Chef Berger has been running the Torkel Restaurant since 1984 with his wife, Edith. Together, husband and wife and the rest of their kitchen staff have transformed it from a historical tavern and restaurant to one of Europe's best-known gourmet establishments.

Liechtenstein has a total land area of 160 square kilometers bounded on the east by Austria, and on the south, west, and north by Switzerland. Ruled by a constitutional monarch since the 1700s, its culinary heritage is steeped in royal traditions and influenced by French, German and Swiss cultures.

The Peninsula Manila scores 100% for service

THE PENINSULA Manila has been voted the Best by Service by the readers of Conde Nast Traveler magazine for its 2004 Gold List: World's Best Places to Stay, appearing in its January 2004 issue. It has been four years in a row that The Peninsula Manila is included in the prestigious list and until now, the only hotel in the Philippines to do so.

The hotel has garnered a perfect 100 percent for service, tying with sister hotel The Peninsula Bangkok. The scores in other areas are as follows: 91.3 percent for rooms, 87.5 percent for food, 87.5 percent for location, 90.9 percent for design with an average of 91.5 percent.

Quoting from the magazine, "Fantastically friendly and well-trained staff earn a perfect score at this neoclassical hotel in Makati City, the business district. Potted palms fill the vast marble lobby. Guest rooms have fresh flowers and traditional décor in bright hues…".

Four other The Peninsula Hotels luxury properties—The Peninsula Bangkok, The Peninsula Hong Kong, The Peninsula Chicago and The Peninsula Beverly Hills —were awarded top honors by the readers of Condé Nast Traveler.

For further information, call Joseph Arias, public relations manager, The Peninsula Manila, corner of Ayala and Makati Avenues, 1226 Makati City, Metro Manila, Philippines; E-mail: jarias@peninsula.com; Tel: (632) 887-2888, (632) 812-3456; Fax: (632) 815-4825, (632) 815-3402; website: www.peninsula.com.

DUSIT Hotel Nikko's Deli Shop, which offers a tempting array of confections for the sweet tooth, greets the year with a big treat for all guests and patrons. Mouthwatering sweets may now be enjoyed at 20-percent discount from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. and 50-percent discount from 7:01 p.m. to 9 p.m. daily. This price off is just one of the treats the hotel has in store in 2004. For queries, call 867-3333 extension 3356.

The Bellevue Hotel's 'Alabang's Finest' holds all-women, all-white affair

THE BELLEVUE Hotel, the toast of the business and social crowd of the southern Metro Manila area, recently held an all-women, all-white affair in honor of the ladies of Alabang.

Breakfast with Tiffany's was organized as one of the activities of Alabang's Finest, a by-invitation-only club of privileged residents and top executives in the south of Metro Manila who have made The Bellevue Hotel their social and business destination of choice. The event, done in partnership with Rustan's and People Asia, featured celebrity table settings and a fashion show of Tiffany & Co. jewelry.

A select all-women guest list dressed in all-white were ushered into the Lobby Lounge of The Bellevue Hotel, which was made to resemble the grace and nostalgia of the classic Audrey Hepburn starrer Breakfast at Tiffany's. A three-piece orchestra played the immortal movie theme "Moon River", along with a host of other timeless tunes. The early brunch event was also highlighted by the impeccable selection of specially prepared fare, such as Belgian waffles, an assortment of cheeses, scones, fruit tarts and fine wines.

Celebrity table settings with Tiffany & Co premium items included Katrina Goulbourn-Feist for the bridal table, Daphne Oseña-Paez for the baby shower table and Lulu Tan Gan for the Filipiniana social table. A fashion show inspired by the classic film featured couture by Lulu Tan Gan and accessories by Tiffany & Co, complemented by Tiffany Chairs provided by the banquet ensemble to set the mood.

With the success of Breakfast with Tiffany's, The Bellevue Hotel gives members of Alabang's Finest more reasons to celebrate. With its new catchphrase "Make it Alabang. Make it Bellevue," the hotel promises to be the new toast of the Alabang social scene. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

THE FORMIDABLE team behind the success of Breakfast With Tiffany's at The Bellevue Hotel: The Bellevue general manager Cyndy Tan-Jarabata, Prestige Brand's associate director for marketing Peachy Badilla, People Asia editor-in-chief Joanne Rae Ramirez and designer Lulu Tan-Gan.

'GKNB?' to fold up soon?

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

COULD it be true that "Game Ka Na Ba?" will soon fold up and host **Kris Aquino** will have a new show? Perhaps the game show mania has waned since viewers can't help but notice that both "GKNB?" and "Extra Challenge" have become localized spin-offs of "Fear Factor."

***

How true is it that **Jay-R** is now wooing **Angelika de la Cruz**? Guess that means his rumored romance with **Kyla** went pfttt.

***

Singer **Dingdong Avanzado** is running for vice mayor of Quezon City. He has all the good intentions, but wouldn't the flak that actors-turned-politicos are getting be detrimental to him?

***

Will VJ Iya of IBC 13's "Game Channel" be the next girl in **Oyo Boy Sotto's** life, especially now that he needs moral support to cope with the death of his cousin **Miko Sotto**? According to Iya, Oyo Boy wants to live his life the way Miko had told him to.

MYMP debut

MYMP (Make Your Momma Proud) has just released their first album under Ivory Music and Video. Entitled "Soulful Acoustic," the 11-track CD includes "A Little Bit" and "Paalam Na." The group is composed of **Juris Fernandez** on vocals, **Chin Alcantara** on acoustic (nylon!) guitar and vocals, and **Mike Manahan** on percussion and vocals.

Easy, accessible and cool are but some of the things that can be said of MYMP's acoustic sound, but what really differentiates them from the other acoustic groups, duos and solo artists is that everyone in MYMP can sing solo and harmonize.

Juris' vocal range can be frighteningly versatile. She has the range of your regular diva but she has a style that's all hers.

Mike, a certified *kilabot ng kolehiyala*, combines good looks and good voice.

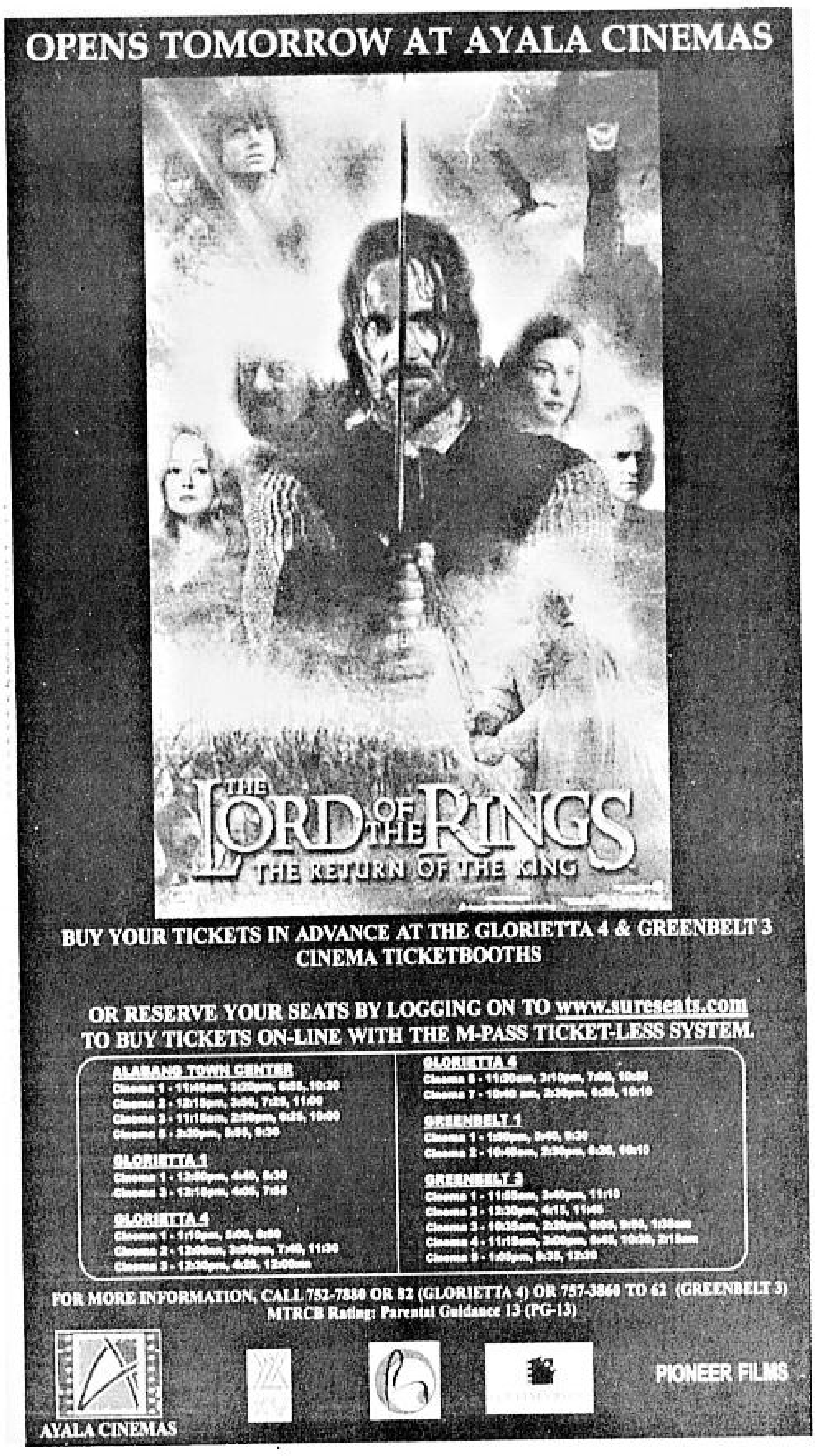
Chin, the musical director/arranger, also sings and can harmonize with the best of them.

FPJ trivia

I HAVE always been apolitical, but since presidential aspirant **Fernando Poe Jr.**—*Tito* Ronnie— is the man of the hour, I'd like to share with you some interesting trivia about him.

He prefers feel-good movies to action movies. He doesn't like it if you make *pangalumbaba* in front of him. Da King has fear of flying but I'm sure that he will soon conquer that fear if and when he would need to make state visits. He calls me "proxy" because every time he would be a sponsor at a wedding, I would be representing my mom. It remains to be seen if he will be fit to be more than just a proxy for the top office in the land.

For feedback, e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com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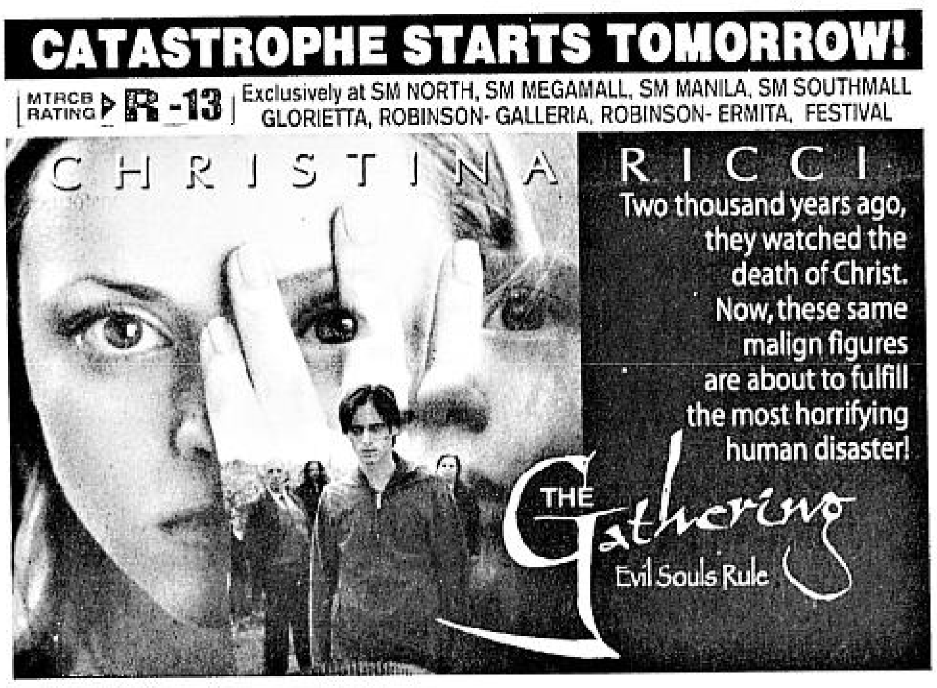
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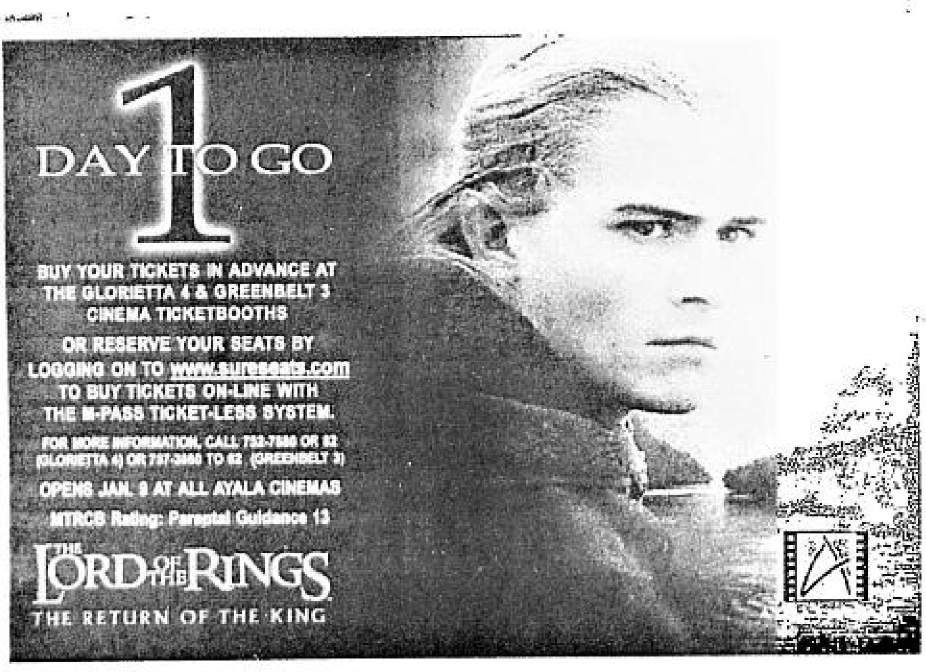

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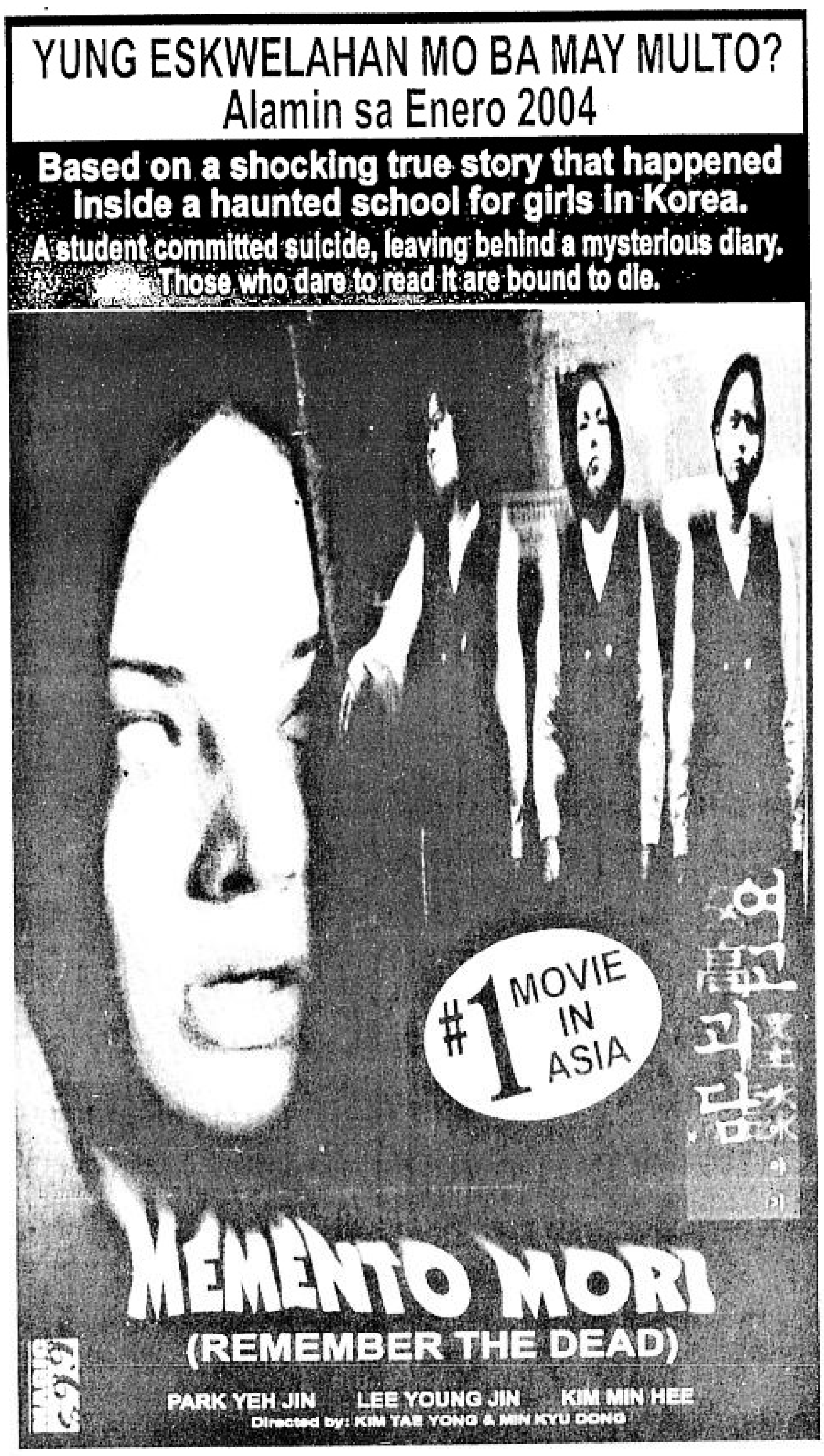
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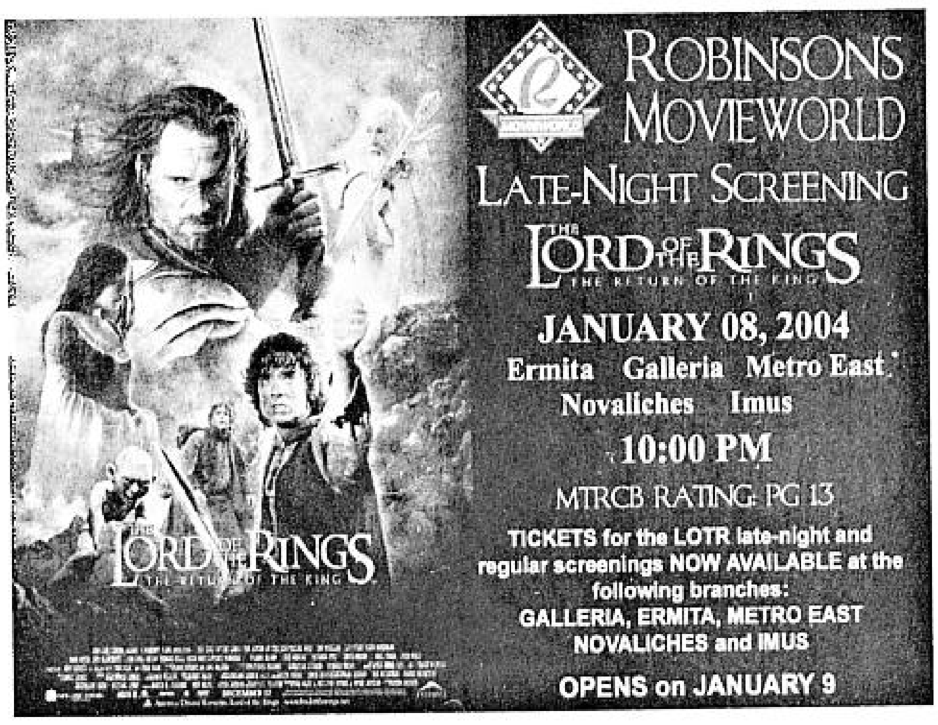
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Editor Louie C. Camino

'MTB' under 20-day tight watch, says MTRCB

By Marinel R. Cruz

THE MOVIE and Television Review and Classification Board is no longer asking for the 20-day suspension of "Masayang Tanghali Bayan," but vowed to "strictly and closely" monitor it for 20 days starting Jan. 6.

MTRCB Chair Consoliza Laguardia said she asked ABS-CBN to submit 20 taped episodes of the noontime show starting,with its episode last Tuesday.

Laguardia said the MTRCB was "more than satisfied" with the network's promises. "We also appreciate the apology Willie (Revillame) made on TV last week," she added.

In a letter sent to the MTRCB last Monday, ABS-CBN senior vice president for TV production Cory Vidanes promised to implement "changes" in "MTB," including "less revealing" outfits of guests and dancers particularly in the "Urong Sulong" segment, "tamer" production numbers and "constant reminders" to the hosts of the network's internal guidelines.

On Jan. 1, ABS-CBN terminated Willie's contract as a host of "MTB" after he again "uttered offensive remarks" on the show. But Willie claimed he resigned.

"I sacrificed," Willie said. "I resigned to keep the staff from being affected by what I did."

An adjudication board of the MTRCB had complained about Willie's conduct in the Dec. 19 episode of "MTB." The board members are film director Joey Romero, journalist Ed Sicam, businessman Farley Aguila, and lawyer Eric Mallonga.

In that episode, Willie told co-host Mahal, who was celebrating her birthday, "*Sana ma*-devirginize *ka na*."

On "The Buzz" last Sunday afternoon, Willie claimed that his remark was a "slip of the tongue."

"It was a running gag on Mahal," he said. "It meant nothing. I only wanted to make people laugh."

Laguardia said, "The MTRCB hopes Willie has learned his lesson. It also wishes ABS-CBN would still get him to appear on the channel, but in a different kind of show, one that's not aired live to keep him from going out of bounds."

Strange casting choices

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SOME directors believe that correct casting is 80 percent of good acting. By that yardstick, the latest edition of the Metro film fest showcased some strange and ornery casting choices.

Leading the hapless pack is the decision to cast **Snooky Serna** as the mother of **Ogie Alcasid** in "Captain Barbell." Snooky is one of the best actresses we have, but even she couldn't successfully pull off that improbable thespic challenge. For one thing, she and Ogie must be approximately the same age, and no amount of aging make-up and hair whitening for Snooky could distract viewers from that obvious fact.

Then there's the fact that Snooky is *mestiza*, while Ogie has distinctly Asian features. So, their mother-son relationship was extremely dubious from the very start.

In "Mano Po 2," the most glaring instance of miscasting was **Richard Gutierrez**'s being made a member of a Fil-Chinese clan. Richard's strong *mestizo* features just couldn't be ignored or mitigated by make-up, so the believability of his entire portrayal was seriously compromised. We can surmise that Richard was cast in the movie because he's popular, but physical credibility is a major requirement that cannot be overlooked just to enhance a production's star value.

"Mano Po 2," has other characters who suffer from a similar lack of physical credence. For instance, not many years separate the three wives in the movie, but when the storytelling gets to current times, the most senior wife (played by **Susan Roces**) looks much older than Wife 2 (**Zsa Zsa Padilla**) and Wife 3 (**Lorna Tolentino**). The "fault" isn't Susan's. Both Zsa Zsa and Lorna should have been made to look older for their 2003 scenes. Perhaps they didn't much relish the idea?

The visual and chronological disparity was distracting, because Susan ended up looking like the two other wives' mother.

'Cold Mountain'

"COLD Mountain" has won eight Golden Globe nominations, and is also predicted to figure strongly in the upcoming Academy Awards. It isn't surprising therefore that local distributions have been competing enthusiastically for the right to distribute **Anthony Minghella**'s latest movie in the Philippines. And the winner is—Buena Vista International.

Based on **Charles Frazier**'s best-selling novel about the US Civil War, "Cold Mountain" tells the story of Inman (**Jude Law**), a wounded confederate soldier on a perilous journey home to his mountain community, where he hopes to get reunited with his sweetheart Ada (**Nicole Kidman**). In his absence, Ada has been struggling to survive, and has revived her father's farm with the help of Ruby (**Renee Zellweger**), an intrepid young drifter.

Minghella has been acclaimed for his work on past films like "The English Patient" and "The Talented Mr. Ripley."

For disadvantaged kids

ON Jan. 16, from 2 to 5 p.m. at SM North Edsa, **Bibsy Carballo**'s Snack Arts, "Chikiting Patrol," ERMS and SM Supermalls mount "Bata, Bata, May Kaibigan Ka Pa Ba?," a gift-giving treat for disadvantaged, deprived and homeless children. The event will be telecast on "Chikiting Patrol" at 6:30 p.m. on Jan. 24, on ABC-5.

Guest performers include **Bayang Barrios** and **Montet Acoymo**. Bibsy's talents (**Boots Anson-Roa, Anna Fegi, Ricky Davao, Isabel Rivas, Ces Quesada**, etc.) are expected to give the kids more reasons to smile. And the young hosts of "Chikiting Patrol" will help out with the games and gift-giving.

'Karnabal'

FROM Jan. 21 to 24, the Ateneo Liberal Arts Block presents the third Fine Arts festival of Ateneo de Manila University, titled "Karnabal."

Activities include the book compilation of Creative Writing majors presented in a poetry reading, and Theater majors' production, "Palabas," featuring three plays written by Fine Arts majors.

"Karnabal" will be held at the SEC (Science Education Complex) Field. Call 0918-5965080.

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

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Sara Lee

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PETRON Ultron

End-2003 forex reserves hit $16.8B

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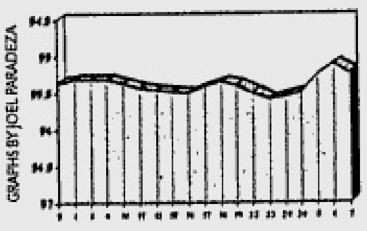


DECEMBER JANUARY

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 55.245 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., Jan.7, 2004

¥ 106.24 = $ 1

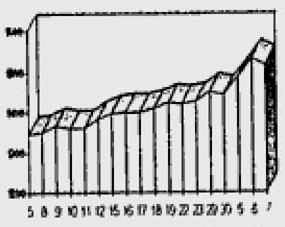
As of 5 p.m., Jan. 7, 2004

GOLD: $419.60-420.10

per ounce Hong Kong, Jan. 7, 2004

Stocks cut 2-day rally

STOCKS led by telecom firms PLDT and Globe Telecom Inc. dipped yesterday as players cashed in after a rapid rise over the past two days, traders said.



(See stock market report on Page B2)

The main index fell 1.09 percent or 16.65 points to 1,516.09 points, after rising more than 6 percent in two days.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), the country's dominant phone firm, shed 3.4 percent or P35 to P995, after ending the previous session near a four-year high.

Globe Telecom, the second-largest phone company, closed 1.49 percent or P15 lower at P990.

Analysts said investors were positive about telecom companies this year with elections due on May 10 expected to boost the volume of text messages and voice calls.

"Following two days of strong gains, the market corrected," said BPI Securities investment analyst Spencer Yap.

"We'll have to wait and see if the market will continue its ascent. If the market does not breach the support level of 1,480, we could see a return to the rally." Yap saw the market's next resistance at 1,550.

Analysts said bright prospects for local telecom players and likely steady interest rates this year given low inflation in 2003 had helped renew foreign interest in the local equities market, which was largely avoided by foreign players last year.

For the past two sessions, foreign investors were net buyers to the tune of P315.97 million.

Reuters

INTEREST RATES

January 07, 2004-MART1 Benchmark Interest Rates	Rates MART1 7-Jan-04	MART1 6-Jan-04
1 Month	6.43	6.4017
3 Months	6.5232	6.5269
6 Months	7.9625	7.9482
1 Year	8.5018	8.4577
2 Years	9.265	9.2167
3 Years	10.2567	10.105
4 Years	10.6885	10.4467
5 Years	11.0467	10.7817
7 Years	11.3411	11.2683
10 Years	11.5946	11.6133
20 Years	11.9839	11.9717
25 Years	12.2568	12.2304

SOURCE: MART/BLOOMBERG

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PHILIPPINES' foreign exchange reserves stood at $16.815 billion as of end-2003, the highest yearend level for the country's dollar holdings, though artificially propped up by huge foreign borrowings incurred by the government and the central bank last year.

The end-December level was slightly higher than the previous month's $16.8 billion and about $600 million more than the $16.18 billion level in end-2002.

A healthy level of reserves is good for the peso as it gives the central bank with enough ammunition to fight currency speculators.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the strong gross international reserves would also provide the central bank with enough flexibility in its monetary policies this year.

He stressed, however, that the reserves could drop to the $15-billion level within the year if the government would borrow 70 percent of its financing requirement from the local market.

The BSP chief said the current GIR would be sufficient to pay the country's 4.7 months' worth of imports and equivalent to 1.5 times the Philippines' short-term debt.

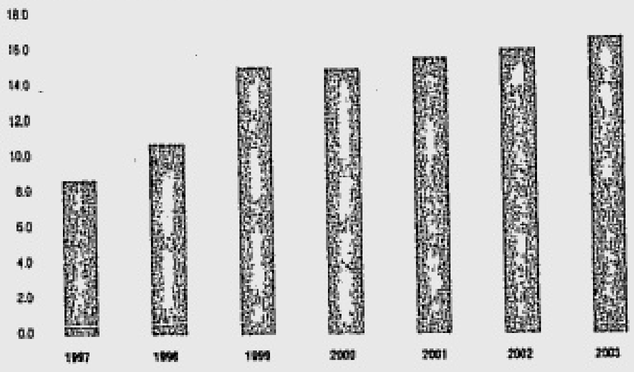
Last year, the GIR was boosted by massive foreign borrowings of the government and the central bank. The national government and the cash-strapped National Power Corp. raised more than $3 billion from the foreign bond market while the BSP borrowed $1 billion.

"Clearly, our level of reserves reflect the government's prudent fiscal and debt management and would show investors that we are not in a crisis as we have enough funds to pay our maturing obligations," the BSP chief said.

Buenaventura acknowledged that the GIR was being propped up artificially by borrowings. He added though that the level was boosted by revaluation of gold, which had substantially increased in value recently.

GROSS INTERNATIONAL RESERVES

end-December 1997 to 2003, in US$ billions



Comprised mainly of US dollars, the GIR is the total foreign currency holdings of the central bank and included gold and special drawing rights, the currency used by the International Monetary Fund.

Still, the Philippines has among the lowest level of external reserves in Asia considering that Thailand has about three times more, South Korea has about $100 billion and Japan even twice that amount.

The BSP said that with the higher-than-expected dollar reserves this year, the balance-of-payments deficit should reach only $446 million against the forecast of $1.15 billion.

Meralco gets better supply deal

By Ronnel W. Domingo

UTILITY giant Manila Electric Co. yesterday announced it had concluded negotiations with independent power producer First Gas Power Corp., which resulted in a package of concessions worth up to P30 billion.

In a statement, Meralco said an amended power purchase agreement signed with First Gas included immediate savings for consumers worth P10.6 billion or 3 centavos per kilowatt-hour.

Meralco buys electricity from First Gas aside from the state-owned National Power Corp. and Quezon Power Philippines Ltd. (also an IPP).

First Gas owns the 1,200-megawatt Sta. Rita natural gas-fired power plant in Batangas while FGP Corp. operates the 500-MW San Lorenzo plant.

According to Meralco IPP review committe chair Margarito Teves, customers would begin to receive the full benefits of the amended deal once it has been approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

The Meralco board of directors had formed the committee to oversee talks with the IPPs. The other member is independent director Emilio Vicens, Union Fenoza's managing di-

MERALCO/B2

Exports, investments seen growing this year

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

INCOMING Trade and Industry Secretary Cesar A.V. Purisima said he was optimistic that exports and investments would grow this year despite uncertainty over the May elections which could keep businessmen on a wait-and-see mode.

In a briefing in Malacañang, Purisima said the overall forecast for Philippine exports this year was favorable in view of the rosy projection for shipments of computer chips and electronic products.

"The semiconductor industry (which accounts for 70 percent of total exports) expects revenues to rise between 10 and 30 percent due to strong global demand which means that total exports would grow by at least 10 percent, too," Purisima said.

While he has yet to set an investment target this year, Purisima said his goal during the next few months was to attract more foreign investors, to retain existing players and encourage them to grow their businesses further.

He said his main target was the information and communication technology sector, specifically call centers which he expected to double in number this year. "We are well-positioned as an alternative to India in call centers," Purisima said.

Aside from ICT, Purisima said another priority in his term was to continue the development of small and medium enterprises, particularly to the Sulong financing program which has unloaded P20 billion in low-interest loans over the past two years.

"In most economies worldwide, the SMEs generate more employment than large corporations. The challenge for the Philippines is to develop the entrepreneurial spirit," Purisima said.

Purisima said he would also convene the National Price Coordinating Council this week to discuss the supply problems in meat and chicken that has led prices of these commodities to soar in the past weeks.

Purisima, who is scheduled to be formally sworn into office on Monday, attended his first Cabinet meeting yesterday and said he found it "very interesting." He said he would only bring with him a secretary and chief of staff.

Despite shifting to public service, Purisima said he remained "realistic" in assessing the country's potential. "Six months is six months but we will continue to execute what has been started by Secretary (Roxas)," said Purisima. Former Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel A. Roxas II resigned last month to campaign for seat in the Senate.

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Da King in eye

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

SUPPOSEDLY the business community is afraid of both friends of the man named Band ... Wrist Band, who both do not want to follow his footsteps to the hospital.

I mean, both friends of Wrist Band also do not want to be incarcerated in the military camp which happens to be near his family's rest house in Tanay.

Actually, they also want to be the President of the Republic, this ex-cop Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a.k.a. Ping, and this movie actor Fernando Poe Jr., a.k.a. Da King.

That's his media tag not because, as they say, in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed is king, but because among local actors, he has the longest sideburns.

In business, anyway, if either of the two will win this May, they foresee terrible things happening in this country, coinciding with the end of the world.

* * *

THEY were saying that such a fear even showed in the financial markets, where nothing anyway has actually been happening for the past four years already.

In other words, the Makati crowd looks at a Sideburns or Ping presidency as they do some *taong grasa* walking into Shangrila Hotel or something—not without disdain.

Surprise! The peso's exchange rate against the dollar is moving down, which means that the local currency was gaining against the foremost international currency.

As the peso posted its all-time low against the dollar a few weeks ago, ours was the only currency in the world depreciating against the dollar. At least we were different.

* * *

AT that time, they said it was all the fault of Sideburns. First, he was leading in the surveys. Second, he took the surveys seriously.

For how else do you explain the temerity of the man? Look, he even announced his plan to run for President. All media outfits even carried the news.

But aside from the amazing recovery of the peso in the past few days, the comatose stock market showed signs of life.

Based on the overall index of stock prices, the market a couple of days ago already went up to its highest level in about two years.

Again, only a few weeks ago, they said that the stock market was about to throw up upon hearing the news about Sideburns.

Now, as the stock market is moving up, and the peso is moving down, meaning, they are both doing well, how do they explain those mysteries of the universe?

* * *

YOU can almost hear the Makati type saying, it's simple, and it's due to the terrific effort of this cute administration of Gloriaetta to do nothing at all in four years.

Neither was the business crowd foolish enough to think, by some remote chance, that those mysteries were linked somehow to Sideburns.

No, definitely not, this stock market run does not mean an approval by the business community of the latest survey results showing that the Sideburns was leading the presidential field.

In the polite crowd of Makati's big business, before they say anything kind or favorable about Sideburns, they would rather be hogtied somewhere by the giant anthill or something.

* * *

BUT the thing is, the stock market is moving up, while Sideburns is doing well in the surveys. And from what I hear, the Sideburns camp is mighty glad about it.

It is nevertheless hard to say if Sideburns' media handlers are stupid enough to credit the run-up to their candidate.

Nobody thinks that the market upturn was a sign that the Makati crowd already accepted the inevitability of a Sideburns presidency.

Whether he likes it or not, Sideburns still must explain what he intends to do with this sagging economy. Here, he cannot just use his standard movie role as the quiet type.

* * *

ACTUALLY, as reports say, foreign money fueled the early year run in the stock market. Since dollars were coming in, the peso naturally should strengthen a bit.

Some foreign fund managers, with billions at his disposal, this time decided to throw some crumbs to the Philippine stock market.

Thus, the buying came from hot money, which is nothing but casino money, some gambling money, a little insurance bet made by fund managers.

That is called positioning, which fund mangers have been doing here in the past 20 years or so at the start of the year.

It is a "just in case" move, actually, because you never know if this country can perform a miracle and finally get its act together.

* * *

NOW I have a little story about Sideburns, told to me by my former boss at GMA Channel 7, where I used to handle the news department.

That was Antonio Seva, who was executive vice president of the network then, before he decided to join the Wrist Band administration as press undersecretary.

Anyway, Seva related to me how GMA-7, quite by accident, got the exclusive rights to air all the Sideburns movies for the series called "FPJ sa GMA."

Sideburns already had a verbal agreement with another television station on the rights for his movies.

But he went to GMA-7 instead, even accepting an amount much lower than what the other station already offered.

Apparently, Sideburns did not like what somebody big in the other television station did to him. Sideburns was made to wait.

Supposedly, the two giants in media had an appointment to finalize the deal. The television bigshot was late for the meeting. Bad shot!

Everybody around him knew that if Sideburns liked waiting, he would have worked in a restaurant. There, to the *sipsip* crowd, you know what to do!

* * *

BY the way, reports said that PLDT cellular telephone subsidiary Smart Telecoms wanted to buy GMA-7.

Of course Smart has the money. Based on its sales and income figures in the past year, Smart probably even accounted for the GNP growth.

But from the looks of it, the PLDT group had its chance to acquire GMA-7 and let it go. The GMA-7 owners are not exactly dying to sell.

At least, they are not nowadays. The network made about P3 billion last year. Its income was even better than the No. 1 network ABS-CBN.

* * *

EVEN in the business magazine Far Eastern Economic Review's listing of leading companies in Asia, GMA-7 has beaten ABS-CBN two years in a row.

In the listing for 2003, GMA-7 was ninth place, followed by ABS-CBN at tenth. The year before, GMA-7 was tenth, while ABS-CBN did not make it to the top 10.

In the stock market, they are even saying that GMA-7 is ripe for an IPO. It is one of the few companies whose public listing the market awaits.

GMA-7 is not going to do it this year. Apparently the network does not need the money, at least not yet. For one, unlike other networks, it does not have a lot of maturing debts.

* * *

Despite their bad experience in Naia Terminal 3, the Germans are still coming to the Philippines. The German carmaker Daimler is going hands-on here.

That's the maker of the status symbol car Mercedes Benz. I heard it wants to take over marketing and distribution of the brand locally from Commercial Motors, which may become just a dealer.

Ahead of Daimler was of course the other German carmaker BMW, which in the past couple of years turned aggressive in marketing its low-end cars here.

Maybe those are the models which can sell here. Even then, the BMW dealers could not hit the target of the mother company in Deutcheland.

The dealers were assigned to sell some 1,200 units last year. They only sold about 800 units.

Now, Daimler wants its dealers to sell at least a thousand units. Sure, why not! What, with the Pinoy obsession with Chedeng! But about if Sideburns wins?

PSE shares trading rules tightened

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission has issued an order restricting the trading of Philippine Stock Exchange shares for broker-dealers' own accounts.

In a memorandum, the PSE said the SEC order had prohibited broker-dealers from buying the shares of the exchange, which recently listed by introduction, either for their own accounts or for other brokers until the 20-percent ownership ceiling prescribed by the Securities Regulation Code was fully complied with.

The SRC prohibits a single group or industry from owning more than 20 percent of the exchange.

The prohibition also covers the the purchase of PSE shares for the accounts of the broker-dealers' subsidiaries and affiliates, directors, officers, principal stockholders, nominees and the staff's spouses and relatives up to the fourth civil degree of consanguinity.

Even when the 20-percent ownership ceiling is met, the SEC rule provides that the prohibition will automatically set in whenever the benchmark is breached.

The SEC had come up with the restriction to encourage new investors to buy into the PSE. Compliance with the ceiling, however, has already been delayed by two years.

The restrictions were also aimed at curbing speculative trading of PSE shares.

Citing the SEC order, the PSE said the prohibition would not apply when a transaction was cleared by the SEC.

The SEC may approve the purchase of shares once it was proven that the deal was not under the control of a broker-dealer in terms of voting rights and beneficial ownership.

"While there is no prohibition for employees of broker-dealers to acquire shares in the PSE, there is a possibility that the money they (employees) will be using may have come from the broker-dealers themselves. The SEC will consider such a purchase a circumvention," the memorandum cited.

To allow a more effective monitoring of the ownership limit, the SEC had mapped out a scheme by which the brokers would have to identify the clients who are trading the PSE shares.

When the PSE converted into a stock corporation in 2001, it distributed 50,000 shares to each of its 184 member-brokers in exchange for their seats in the exchange.

SEC asked to intervene in PRSP elections

SEVERAL past presidents of the Public Relations Society of the Philippines have asked the Securities and Exchange Commission to monitor the organization's elections tomorrow.

The former officials requested the SEC to assign an SEC official to observe the polls tomorrow following concerns over the "arbitrary acts" of the PRSP officer-in-charge.

The PRSP officer-in-charge allegedly refused to open the books of the organization and has disqualified many organization members on the eve of the PRSP elections.

Isleta added that the PRSP secretariat currently headed by Armando Manoloto "has been suspiciously refusing to receive requests for renewals of membership even from former PRSP presidents, and heads of the PR Congress and Anvil Awards."

The election of a new set of PRSP officers is set for tomorrow, Jan. 9.

Other PRSP presidents joined Isleta in airing their concern over what has been happening at the largest organization of PR professionals in the country.

Sharing his concern are former PRSP presidents Charlie Agatep, Melvyn Martin, Roel Ramirez, Bert Pasquin, Sonny Valencia, Oscar Villadolid, Elpi Cuna, George Balagtas and Virgilio Pantaleon.

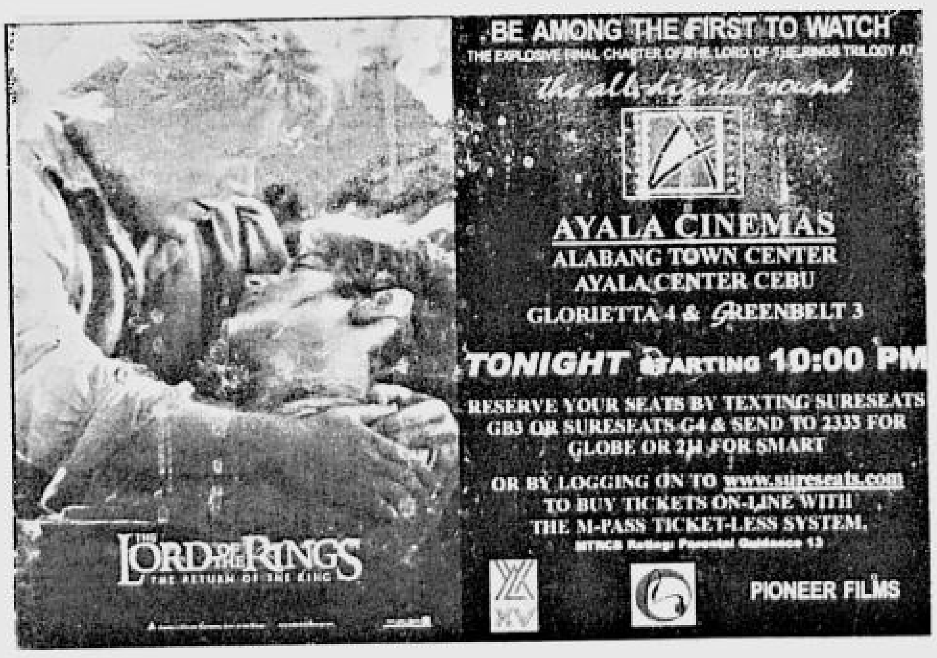
Elections committee chair Pete A. Padre Jr. is caught in the middle of the tension over the elections, which pits the group of former presidents with incumbent PRSP president Winston Marbella.

"I am appealing to Pete (Padre) to ensure the impartiality of the election committee," Isleta said.

This is the first time in the history of PRSP that an officer has refused to receive membership dues meant for the membership organization, said Amylyn de Quiros, whose check was returned on grounds that the payment was late.

Moves were also underway to ask Padre to examine all the proxies.

The former presidents are also poised to question the appointment of Manaloto who has allegedly advised Marbella not to call membership meetings, make on the spot induction of new members and refuse to submit the complete financial statements of the latest PR Congress to the Congress chair, Jones Campos.



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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 7, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	30,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	18.5	18.75	18	18	447,100
Bank of the Phil. Islands	49	49	49	49	1,093,900
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	16	16	16	16	10,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	39.5	41	39	40	699,800
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.52	0.52	450,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	29	29	27.5	28	490,300
Philippine National Bank	24.5	25	24.5	25	19,100
Security Bank Corp	18.25	18.25	17.75	17.75	45,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	27.5	27.5	27	27.5	13,700
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
ATR Kim Eng Fin. Corp.	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	250,000
Bankard Inc	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.18	25,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1780	1780	1780	1780	410
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.34	265,000
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1400	1400	1390	1390	1,320
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	27	27	26	26	103,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.72	0.74	0.72	0.72	8,180,000
Globe Telecom Inc	1005	1005	975	990	52,570
Ipeople Inc.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	90,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.047	0.047	0.047	0.047	3,100,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.041	0.041	0.039	0.04	1,800,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp	0.92	0.97	0.92	0.93	15,050,000
Transpacific Broadcast	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	13,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1030	1050	995	995	218,780
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	43,500,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	16	17.25	16	16.75	1,202,100
Manila Electric Co. B	27	28	26.5	27	7,056,800
Petron Corp.	2.36	2.42	2.34	2.36	10,627,000
Salcon Power Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.1	2.1	23,000
Trans-Asia Oil And Energy	1	1	1	1	80,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	202,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.3	3.35	3.3	3.35	1,907,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.33	0.33	650,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	100,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	17,000
Union Cement Corp.	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	283,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	108,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	87,500
Jollibee Foods Corp.	21	23.75	21	21.5	1,055,400
RFM Corp.	0.67	0.67	0.67	0.67	120,000
San Miguel Corp. A	54.5	54.5	54	54.5	102,500
San Miguel Corp. B	64.5	64.5	64	64.5	114,500
Universal Robina Corp.	5.8	6	5.8	6	143,000
Vitarich Corp	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	5,000
Atok-Big Wedge Inc. B	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	2,000
Ayala Corp.	5.6	5.8	5.5	5.5	12,538,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.15	3.25	3.15	3.25	365,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	3,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	10,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.006	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	13,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	150,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.72	1.72	1.72	1.72	10,000
Boulevard Holdings, Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	300,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.56	0.58	0.55	0.56	18,120,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	160,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.185	110,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	1,500,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	120,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp	20.5	21	20.25	20.5	1,202,300
Forum Pacific Inc	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	50,000
Global Equities Inc	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	700,000
Ionics Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	173,000
J G Summit Holdings Inc.	2.02	2.04	2.02	2.02	934,000
Macroasia Corp.	0.58	0.58	0.58	0.58	200,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	8,205,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	20,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.31	0.31	0.29	0.29	3,510,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	260,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	10,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	100,000-
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Steniel Manufacturing	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	110,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.55	0.57	0.55	0.57	4,250,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	26	26	25.5	25.5	969,300
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6.2	6.2	6	6.1	7,675,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	30,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	20,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	160,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	460,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.23	0.235	0.22	0.22	4,980,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.08	1.1	1.06	1.08	4,235,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.16	0.165	0.16	0.165	200,000
Fil-Estate Land, Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	90,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8	8,935,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	0.0038	10,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co A	0.24	0.24	0.235	0.235	3,100,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	1,100,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	6,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.009	0.009	0.0085	0.0085	7,000,000
Omico Corp.	0.003	0.0032	0.003	0.003	161,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.45	0.46	0.45	0.45	2,640,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.47	70,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	20,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.16	0.18	0.16	0.18	60,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.16	50,000

CURRENCIES

January 7, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.785546	1.000000	55.142000
Japan	Yen	0.007399	0.009419	0.519400
United Kingdom	Pound	1.430951	1.821600	100.446700
Hongkong	Dollar	0.101197	0.128824	7.103600
Switzerland	Franc	0.637722	0.811820	44.765400
Canada	Dollar	0.610940	0.777726	42.885400
Singapore	Dollar	0.462958	0.589345	32.497700
Australia	Dollar	0.605244	0.770475	42.485500
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.083787	2.652661	146.273000
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.209479	0.266667	14.704600
Brunei	Dollar	0.461597	0.587613	32.402200
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000120	0.006600
Thailand	Baht	0.020080	0.025562	1.409500
UAE	Dirham	0.213876	0.272264	15.013200
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.273000	70.195800
Argentina	Peso	0.274666	0.349650	19.280400
Brazil	Real	0.275533	0.350754	19.341300
Denmark	Kroner	0.134277	0.170934	9.425600
India	Rupee	0.017238	0.021944	1.210000
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.206750	0.263193	14.513000
Mexico	New Peso	0.072019	0.091680	5.055400
New Zealand	Dollar	0.528205	0.672405	37.077800
Norway	Kroner	0.117043	0.148996	8.215900
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013745	0.017498	0.964900
South Africa	Rand	0.121039	0.154083	8.496400
Korea	Won	0.000663	0.000844	0.046500
Sweden	Kroner	0.109820	0.139801	7.708900
Syria	Pound	0.017753	0.022599	1.246200
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023296	0.029656	1.635300
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000493	0.000627	0.034600

Meralco gets . . .

From page B1

rector for Asia.

Teves said the negotiations with First Gas were finalized last Dec. 29 after a series of meetings held over 17 months.

"First Gas grants many major concession that directly benefit consumers in this renegotiated agreement, which offers added savings under every scenario," the Meralco board director said.

In August last year, Teves said negotiations with the IPPs promised possible savings for consumers of about P3.27 per kWh.

Teves, who is also chief executive of Land Bank of the Philippines, had said total concessions seen to be included in the renegotiated deals with both First Gas and Quezon Power could be at least P44 billion over the duration of the contracts.

Meralco had started buying part of its electricity supply from the IPPs since they went commercial in 2001 and 2002.

The distributor's 25-year power sales contracts with Quezon Power and First Gas are good until 2026 and 2027, respectively.

Paderanga to focus on PSE efficiency

ECONOMIST Cayetano Paderanga, who assumed the Philippine Stock Exchange presidency on Monday, has made organizational strengthening as his first order of business.

In an interview yesterday, Paderanga said he would undertake a review of the functions of each staff to clarify and delineate tasks more effectively.

"We want to know who will do what," Paderanga said.

He said the PSE would work on enhancing efficiency so that the stock market would perform in the way it was expected to.

He also said the PSE was studying the Securities and Exchange Commission's suggestion to spin off the bourse's compliance and surveillance group.

The PSE has considered spinning off the CSG years ago as a new measure to prevent another BW Resources Corp. scandal.

Paderanga also said the PSE would assist trading participants to be able to develop a market that conforms to world-class standards.

The PSE, he added, was continuing discussions to find foreign strategic partners for the local bourse. *Doris C. Dumlao*

Electronics firms question exports data

By Michelle V. Remo

THE LOCAL electronics and semiconductor industry has questioned the accuracy of the November exports data released by the National Statistics Office, saying that the sector performed fairly well during the month.

The Semiconductor and Electronics Industry of the Philippines Inc. (Seipi) said the exports data, which showed the sector's performance declining by 10.3 percent in November 2003, was "impossible," considering the growth posted by majority of the industry's members.

"The November (electronics and semiconductor exports) figure was strange," said Seipi executive director Ernesto Santiago.

Santiago said the biggest electronics and semiconductor firms in the country, including Texas Instruments Philippines Inc. and Amkor Technology Inc., have reported exports growth for the month.

The NSO reported on Tuesday that electronics and semiconductor exports dropped to $2.012 billion in November 2003 from $2.24 billion during the same period in 2002.

Santiago, however, said the industry is keeping its $24.3-billion exports target for 2003, insisting that the NSO figures were "improbable."

Gokongwei's Digitel expects rate deal with AT&T by end-Jan.

By Abigail L. Ho

DIGITAL Telecommunications Phils. Inc. of the Gokongwei group expects to reach a termination rate agreement with American telecommunications giant AT&T Corp. by the end of the month, raising the possibility of finally resolving their long-standing rates dispute.

Digitel senior vice president for legal and inter-carrier services William Pamintuan yesterday said negotiations between the Gokongwei-owned firm and the US carrier were still ongoing but hopes were high that an agreement will be reached soon.

The rates dispute stemmed from a March 10 order by the US Federal Communications Commission that allowed AT&T and MCI International to stop paying their Philippine counterparts for receiving calls from their networks.

The order was issued in response to AT&T and MCI's claims that Philippine carriers engaged in whipsawing, or pitting US carriers against each other to get better deals.

Late last year, most local carriers involved in the dispute decided to enter into interim rate agreements with MCI.

Digitel in November last year struck an agreement with MCI to help facilitate the resolution of their months-long termination rates dispute.

At around the same time, Ayala-owned Globe Telecom Inc. and dominant carrier Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. signed similar agreements with MCI.

Globe said in an earlier statement that its agreement with MCI would be the basis for rates that would ease the flow of direct traffic between MCI and Globe's networks.

The company said that while it had not blocked traffic coming from MCI's network, "the stop-payment order issued by the US (Federal Communications Commission) did create some disruption in the relationship since Globe could not be assured that it would be paid for traffic received from US carriers."

Globe carrier services head Gil Genio said the interim agreement was "an important first step to normalizing the relationship between the parties," pending the lifting of a payment suspension order issued by the US FCC's International Bureau.

PLDT also remained in discussion with AT&T for an interim agreement on rates. Company officials flew to the United States earlier this week to resume talks with the American telecommunications giant.

Other local firms that had yet to finalize agreements with AT&T include Globe and Lopez-owned Bayan Telecommunications Inc.

PLDT cellular subsidiary Smart Communications Inc. already had interim agreements with both MCI and AT&T.

Smart, PLDT buy-in into GMA not likely

FOREIGN ownership restrictions bar Smart Communications Inc. and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. from acquiring a stake in GMA Network Inc., the country's second largest broadcasting company.

GMA 7 said in a statement that the Constitution prevents firms that are not wholly owned by Filipinos from acquiring a stake in any media outfit.

"Neither PLDT nor Smart is qualified to buy any broadcasting company, since both companies are not 100-percent Filipino-owned. This was the reason why Mediaquest Holdings Inc., which is owned by PLDT employees, became the vehicle for the proposed acquisition of GMA Network in 2001," the statement said.

PLDT is 24.47-percent owned by First Pacific Co. Ltd., a conglomerate owned and controlled by the Salim family of Indonesia. Smart, meanwhile, is a wholly owned subsidiary of PLDT.

National Telecommunications Commission chief Armi Jane Borje said in an earlier interview that local firms with even a drop of foreign ownership could not acquire a stake in any media entity because of constitutional restrictions.

GMA Network also denied having received any offers for a buy-in from either PLDT or Smart.

Abigail L. Ho

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Block 2	12	193 sqm	112 sqm	P 4,900,000	P 1,470,000	P 3,430,000
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Jan 21 - Real Estate Taxation and Updates
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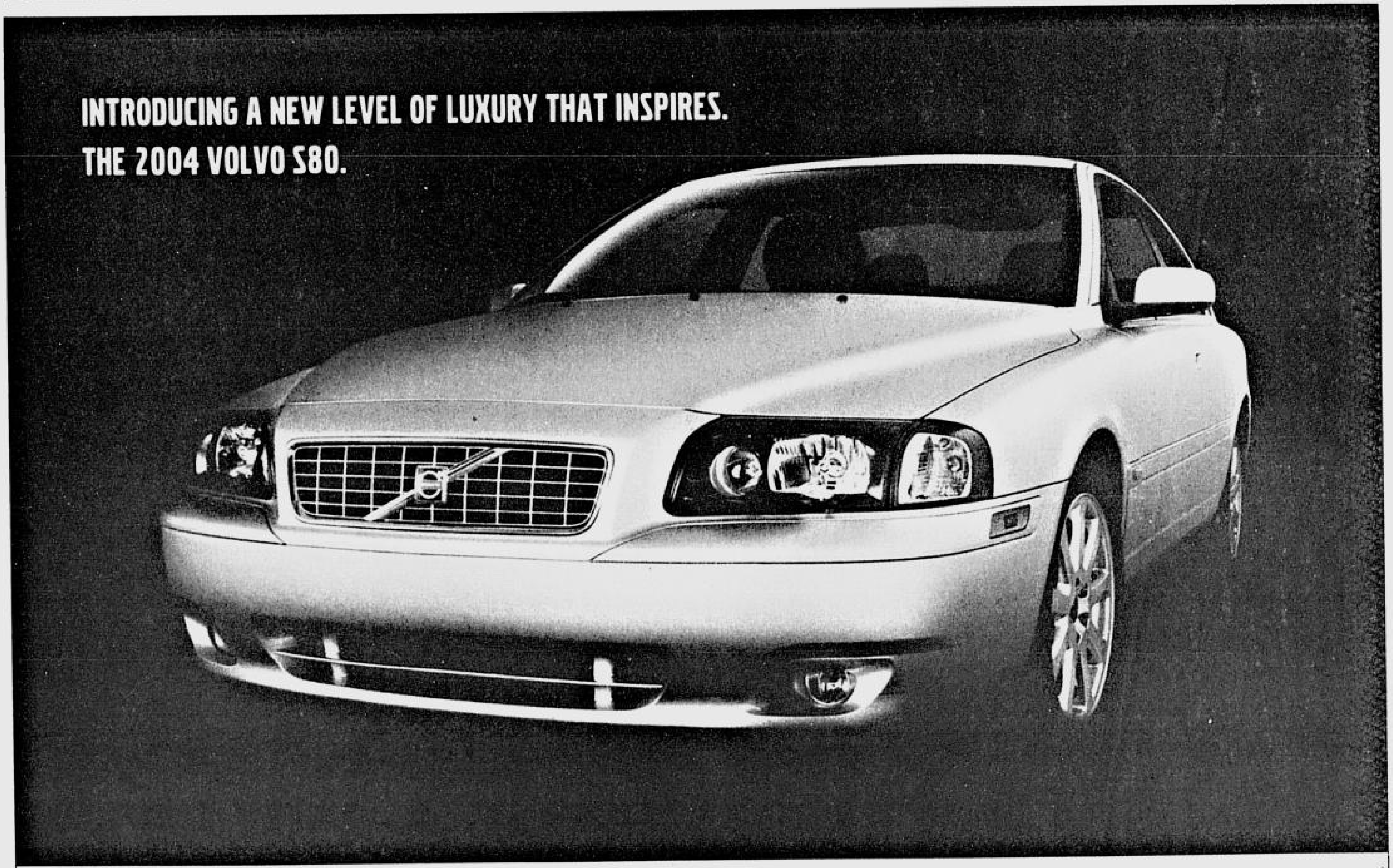

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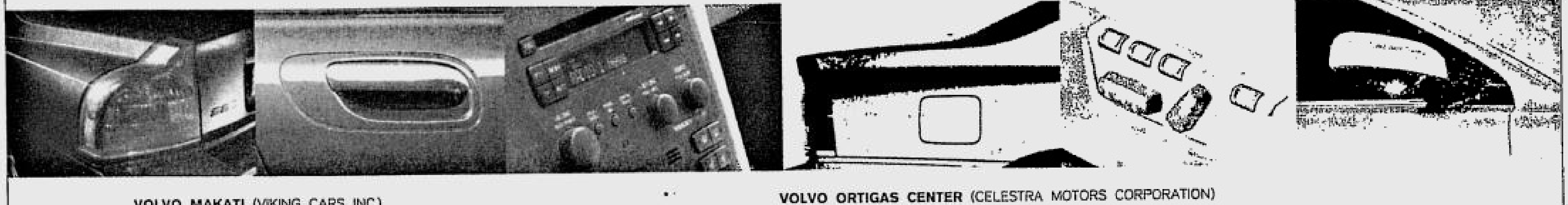

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Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Manila

SECOND DIVISION

IN THE MATTER OF THE REGISTRATION FOR THE PARTY-LIST ELECTIONS OF SECTORAL PARTIES, ORGANIZATIONS, COALITIONS IN CONNECTION WITH THE MAY 10, 2004 NATIONAL ELECTIONS.

Promulgated:

January 7, 2004

x————————————————————x

OMNIBUS RESOLUTION

The determination of granting or denying registration of a sectoral party, organization, political party or coalition under the party-list system is undoubtedly an exercise of the Comelec Constitutional power of administering laws related to the conduct of elections.

Sec. 2 (5), Article IX (C) of the Constitution provides;

> "Register, after sufficient publication, political parties, organizations, or coalitions which, in addition to other requirements, must present their platform or program of government; xxx"

Unequivocal is the mandate of Republic Act No. 7941 for this Commission to accredit those national, regional, sectoral parties or organizations or coalitions thereof belonging to marginalized and underrepresented sectors, organizations and parties, and who lack well-defined political constituencies but who could contribute to the formulation and enactment of appropriate legislation. These sectors include labor, peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, elderly, handicapped, women, youth, veterans, overseas workers and professionals. The purpose of the enactment of RA 7941 is to implement the constitutional mandate on party-list representation and the intent of the Constitution is "to give genuine power to the people, not only by giving more in law to those who have less in life, but more so by enabling them to become veritable lawmakers themselves *(Bagong Bayani, et. al. vs. COMELEC, et al. G.R. No. 147589, 26 June 2001).*

In light of the foregoing premises, the Supreme Court in the case of Bagong Bayani illumined and enumerated the eight-point guidelines in the screening of the said sectors or organizations, to wit:

1. The political party, sector, organization or coalition must represent the marginalized and underrepresented groups identified in Section 5 of RA 7941.
2. Compliance with the declared statutory policy of enabling "Filipino citizens belonging to marginalized and underrepresented sectors to be elected to the House of Representatives;
3. The political party, sector, organization or coalition is not a religious sect or denomination;
4. A party or organization must not be disqualified under Section 6 of RA 7941;
5. The party or organization must not be an adjunct of, or a project organized or an entity funded or assisted by, the government;
6. The party must not only comply with the requirements of the law; its nominees must likewise do so;
7. It is not only the candidate party or organization which must represent marginalized and underrepresented sectors but also its nominees; and
8. The nominee must likewise be able to contribute to the formulation and enactment of appropriate legislation.

For the 2004 elections, the Commission promulgated Resolution No. 6320 entitled: "Rules And Regulations Governing The Filing Of Petitions For Registration, Manifestation To Participate, And Submission Of Names Of Nominees Under The Party-List System Of Representation In Connection With The May 10, 2004 National And Local Elections".

Section 7 and 8 of Resolution No. 6320 reads:

> *"Sec. 7. Documents to support petition for registration.- The following documents shall support petitions for registration:*
>
> *a) Constitution and by-laws;*
> *b) Platform or program of government;*
> *c) List of officers and members particularly showing that the majority of its membership belonging to the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s it seeks to represent;*
> *d) Track record summary showing that it represents and seeks to uplift the marginalized and underrepresented sector/s it seeks to represent;*
> *e) Coalition agreement, if any; and*
> *f) Other information required by the Comelec*
>
> *A filing fee of three thousand pesos (P3,000.00), and a research fee of fifty pesos (P50.00) shall be charged for each petition.*
>
> *Sec. 8. Contents of manifestation to participate. – The manifestation to participate shall be under oath and state the following: a) name and nature of the filer, whether a sectoral party, sectoral organization, political party or coalition; b) the date of its registration with the Commission; c) that at no time has it ceased to exist for a period of one (1) year from the time of its registration; and d) its desire to participate in the party-list election."*

Hearings were conducted on the petitions for registration and the parties after establishing jurisdictional requirements were required to file their memoranda, particularly on the following matters:

a) A statement of the contents of the petition which is a clear and concise statement of the allegations in the petition for registration and compliance with Sec. 6 of Resolution No. 6320;

b) A statement of compliance of the jurisdictional requirements;

c) A statement of the background of the organization from date of its inception and its existence which must be one (1) year at the time of filing of the petition;

d) A statement on the particular organized groups it represent including its constituency and the number of its chapters;

e) A statement that all the officers and members are made aware of the petition and have given their consent, to be attached as annexes to the memorandum;

f) A statement that its affiliates, if any, have given their consent, to be attached as annexes to the memorandum;

g) A statement of its intention to participate in the party-list election and it is marginalized and underrepresented as laid down in R.A. 7941; and

h) A description of the documents supporting the petition for registration with a brief summary of the contents of said document.

Deliberations were made on the petitions, evidence attached thereto, their constitution and by-laws and relevant documents and the memorandum submitted taking into account the seriousness of said party, organization or coalition to participate in the elections.

After an exhaustive evaluation, the Commission, hereby **RESOLVES** as follows:

a) To **GRANT** the registration of the following sectoral parties, organizations or coalitions:

SPP NO. 03-005 (PL) - ANG LABAN .NG INDIGINONG FILIPINO (ALIF)

Petitioner, in February 24, 2003, filed a petition for the registration of its organization as a national sectoral party-list organization. On September 30, 2003, however, it filed a verified motion to amend petition for registration praying that their representation be limited to the regions of the National Capital Region and of Region X.

The Regional Election Directors of Regions X and NCR submitted their respective verification report, as conducted by their Provincial Election Supervisors and Election Officers, of the existence of the petitioner in their respective regions. Accordingly, the reports claim that Petitioner exists in the majority of the municipalities in all the provinces in Region X and in the majority of the districts in the NCR.

Petitioner alleged that it represents the sector of the indigenous cultural communities especially those located or have their origin in the hinterlands of Region X. There is no doubt that indigenous cultural communities are either unrepresented or under-represented in the government. It is therefore the Commission's thinking that the Petitioner's constituents are the very sector that the party-lit has to empower thereby granting them their prayer that they be registered to join the party-list system.

SPP NO. 03-055 (PL) - ANG NAGKAKAISANG KABATAAN PARA SA SAMBAYANAN (ANAK NG BAYAN)

On 21 July 2003, Anak Ng Bayan filed a *Petition For Registration And Accreditation With Manifestation* wherein it alleged the following:

1. *That it is "national sectoral party committed in upholding, defending and promoting the interests of the youth in the attainment of their full potential as Filipino citizens";*
2. *That it is "working in pursuit of its vision to uphold youth empowerment by contributing in the process of nation-building and social transformation;*
3. *That it held its Founding Convention on 19 June 2001, and has since been in continuous existence and active participation in different youth agenda;*
4. *That the "members of ANAK ng BAYAN are composed of students, young professionals, youth workers, youth peasants, out-of-school youth, and youth from different communities all over the country, not limited to an electoral district or territorial unit, with ages ranging from thirteen (13) to thirty five (35) years old"; and,*
5. *That it is not in any manner disqualified by law from participating in the party-list system;*

Anak Ng Bayan is an organization representing the youth sector, and has amply demonstrated a track record for representing the interest of the marginalized and underrepresented youth sector. From its foregoing verified allegations, it has shown that it has all the qualifications and none of the disqualifications provided for by law.

SPP NO. 03-068 (PL) - AGING PILIPINO ORGANIZATION (APO), INC. "AGING PINOY"

The petition filed by the group representing the marginalized sector of the elderly, substantially complies with the requirements for registration pursuant to Comelec Resolution 6320 promulgated on September 12, 2003. The petition was filed on August 9, 2003 and corresponding filing and legal research fess were paid on the same day. The jurisdictional requirements of publication were complied with.

SPP NO. 03-074 (PL) - VETERANS FREEDOM PARTY (VFP)

The petition filed by the group representing the marginalized sector of the veterans and the elderly, substantially complies with the requirements for registration pursuant to Comelec Resolution 6320 promulgated on September 12, 2003. The petition was filed on August 15, 2003 and the corresponding filing and legal research fees were paid on the same day. The jurisdictional requirements of publication were complied with.

The sectoral organization Veterans Freedom Party (VFP) was organized in July 2003 as a separate and distinct entity from the Veterans Federation Party (VFP) which was previously disqualified by the Supreme Court from the party-list elections of 2001 for having connections with the government-established Veterans Federation of the Philippines. It was, however, candid enough to acknowledge that it has the same membership that has grown and multiplied and known then as the Veterans Federation Party.

The disqualification of the Veterans Federation Party is presently pending motion for reconsideration before the Commission, under the main argument that the Veterans Federation Party is the party list arm arising from the group of veterans who are naturally members of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines. When the party was first accredited for the 1998 elections, it was able to sit one nominee in the House of Representatives, until 2001, when it was disqualified for the foregoing reason.

This time however, the group seeking accreditation as the Veterans Freedom Party, has come up with its own Board of Trustees , a separate organizational structure, and funds from "membership dues, revenues from fund-raising activities, donations and contributions and such other resources as may be raised by the Party (Petitioner's Constitution, Article VIII, Finances and Resources, Section 1)."

Considering the foregoing, and the fact that the veterans and elderly are a legitimate marginalized sector which deserves to be represented in Congress; and further considering that no formal objection has been filed in the case, the petition for accreditation of the Veterans Freedom Party is hereby granted.

SPP NO. 03-095 (PL) - AHONBAYAN

The petition filed by the group representing the marginalized sector of the peasantry and urban poor, substantially complies with the requirements for registration pursuant to Comelec Resolution 6320 promulgated on 12 September 2003. The petition was filed on September 29, 2003 and the corresponding filing and legal research fees were paid on the same day. The jurisdictional requirements were complied with.

SPP NO. 03-098 (PL) - SUARA BANGSAMORO

Petitioner SUARA BANGSAMORO asseverated that it represents the Bangsamoro people with the following objectives:

1. To unite the Bangsamoro for the Party principles and objectives;
2. To assert the right to self-determination and work for the dismantling of all oppressive and discriminatory laws and action plans and programs of social institutions that

trample upon and deny the Moro people their basic human rights;

3. To promote a self-reliant economy through genuine industrialization, land reform and sustainable development programs to curtail the continuing plunder of the natural resources of Bangsamoro by selfish vested interest;
4. To strengthen unity and cooperation between the Bangsamoro and the Filipino people by pursuing collective actions on common problems and common aspirations and interfaith-dialogues;
5. To institute programs and mechanisms that shall address the continuing displacement of the Moro people from their homeland; to initiate measures that would stop corporate plunder of and intrusion into the Bangsamoro land and resources;
6. To promote initiatives that shall safeguard the economic rights of the Moro communities in their places of re-settlement and their workplaces abroad;
7. To work for the attainment of peace based on social justice and support the peace talk that address the root causes of the armed conflict in Mindanao;
8. To uphold the Bangsamoro people's basic human rights and freedom and ensure justice for all victims of human rights violations by initiating corresponding support programs;
9. To promote and enhance the cultural heritage of the Bangsamoro for better understanding and appreciation by their Christian and ethnic brethren; and,
10. To contribute to the formulation of a foreign policy that is independent and mutually beneficial to both the Bangsamoro and the Filipino people and that shall promote closer fraternal unity with the islamic countries and the rest of the world.

It also alleged that that Bangsamoro is a regional political party which was founded on March 18, 2002. It has chapters in the majority provinces of Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and cities of Davao and Cotabato.

The objectives of Bangsamoro clearly reflect the concerns of its members as part of indigenous cultural community which concerns can be better addressed in the halls of legislative branch of our government. Bangsamoro belongs to a marginalized or underrepresented sector and has been in existence for more than one year. It is not a religious sect or denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes. Likewise, records on hand do not disclose that Bangsamoro advocate violence, violate any laws, rules or regulations pertaining to elections, or otherwise a foreign party or organization or receive support from any foreign government, foreign political party, foundation or organization.

In sum, Bangsamoro appears to possess none of the disqualifications provided under RA 7941.

SPP NO. 03-102 (PL) - PHILIPPINE CONFEDERATION OF DRIVERS ORGANIZATION AND ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED TRANSPORT OPERATORS (PCDO-ACTO), INC.

Petitioner (PCDP-ACTO) is a non-stock, non-profit organization or association having been registered on March 31, 2000 with the Securities and Exchange Commission. It is a sectoral (transport) organization, which seeks to represent its constituency consisting of various drivers' and operators' organizations, associations, chapters or local federations of Jeepneys, Buses, Taxis, Tricycles and other mass transport vehicles, as well as individual members thereof over the country.

According to petitioner it represents the marginalized and underrepresented group. At present there is no duly elected representative coming from the transport drivers, operators and workers directly or indirectly employed in the transport sector to effect necessary legislations directly or indirectly affecting them, advocate causes in their behalf, or simply give them a direct voice in the Congress and in the larger affairs of the state.

In support of its petition, petitioner attaches copy of their program of government, list of officers and their respective addresses and representatives of its affiliates parties or organization, minutes of general membership meeting showing its members consent to participate in the May 2004 elections.

Petitioner's platforms of government are as follows:

1. Improve the country's road conditions and create new road and highway systems as well as improve transportation and traffic system in the country;
2. Protect and improve the livelihood of the lowly drivers and operators without sacrificing environmental concerns;
3. Create additional economic opportunities for the people in the transportation sector and the people at large;
4. Eradicate graft and corruption not only in the government agencies concerned but also on the street where ordinary drivers ply everyday;
5. Strengthen the country's criminal justice system;
6. In general, to propose and enact measures to help boost the country's economic growth.

Upon close scrutiny of the records of their petition we opt to grant PCDO-ACTO INC.'s petition for accreditation as a Sectoral Party representing the urban poor such as drivers and operators' of Jeepneys, Buses, Taxis, Tricycles and other mass transport vehicles all over the country. From the standpoint stressed by PCDO-ACTO in their petition we affirm that it represents the marginalized and under represented sectors or organizations and lacks well-defined constituencies and from its laid down platform of government it could really contribute, formulate and enact appropriate legislation that will benefit the nation as a whole.

Hence, the petition for accreditation of PCDO ACTO as Sectoral Party representing the urban poor is hereby granted.

SPP NO. 03-119 (PL) - ALAB KATIPUNAN (AK)

Petitioner has extensively documented and supported its claim that they have been in the forefront in representing various marginalized sectors, such as labor, youth, women, urban poor, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and peasants by attaching documents, photos and press releases evidencing their activities in promoting the welfare of the members of their organization.

They have also submitted a well-prepared roster of membership with their corresponding local chapters across the country. Considering the extent of the Petitioner's regional chapters and membership, as alleged in their petition, it is safe for the Commission to assume that the same may have the capacity and viability to conduct a nation-wide political campaign as well as to properly represent their sector in the party-list system.

b) To **DENY** the registration of the following sectoral parties, organizations or coalitions:

SPP NO. 03-008 (PL) - ALLIANCE VOLUNTEER EDUCATORS (AVE)

Petitioner is seeking registration as a sectoral organization with national constituency composed mainly of professionals. It was incorporated on 20 December 2001 as evidenced by its Certificate of Incorporation duly issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

AVE has the following objectives:

To cater and serve to the educational needs of educators and dependents by providing them with the necessary financial, spiritual and moral support.

To engage in the fund raising activities, solicitation, donation and industrial contribution for the benefit of the Alliance's members, dependents and other beneficiaries.

To establish an A.V.E. fund and use the income thereof specifically to propagate and harness the full professional development of each member for the scholarship program of their dependents and beneficiaries and to engage in worthwhile projects as the Board of Directors may deem necessary.

The record of this case shows that AVE is not a marginalized or underrepresented organization within the contemplation of RA 7941. As a sectoral organization composed mainly of professionals, i.e. educators, professors, teachers, and students, AVE's concerns may be coursed through the appropriate agency of the government such as the Department of Education (DEP ED).

Hence, the undersigned recommends denial of AVE's petition for accreditation under the party list system.

SPP NO. 03-049 (PL) - PILIPINO PATRIOTS, INC. (PPI)

In its *Petition* filed on May 8, 2003, Pilipino Patriots, Incorporated (PPI) alleged that:

1. It is a national organization representing tricycle drivers nationwide as one class of rural and urban poor;
2. It has office address at No. 10 Anahaw Street, Town and Country Executive Village, Marcos Highway, Antipolo, Rizal;
3. It is a non-profit organization;
4. It is not a religious sect or denomination;
5. It shall not pursue any unlawful means nor violence in the pursuit of its purpose;
6. It shall uphold and adhere to the Constitution of the Philippines and shall obey all laws and legal orders promulgated by duly constituted authorities;
7. It is not supported by and does not accept financial contributions from any foreign government or their agencies;
8. It will distribute its FIRST booklet xxx titled "LETS FIX THE PHILIPPINES (Ayusin an(g) Pilipinas)" to wake up Filipinos and propose solutions on how to a) eliminate poverty, b) stop corruption, c) fight crime and drugs, d) cure malnutrition, e) stop election cheating, f) upgrade education; and,
9. Its program of government consists of the following:

a. Seek to pass laws to cover franchise operations of tricycle nationwide so as to guide all municipalities in regulating tricycle operations.

b. Set up health coverage programs for the benefit of its members and families.

c. Provide legal advise (sic) and assistance to all its members that get into an accident.

d. Train all its members to obey traffic rules and road courtesy to avoid accidents and for the maintenance of a smooth flow of traffic in the areas of their operations.

e. Set up a National coop spare parts depot to ensure low prices of parts.

f. Encourage SSS contributions for old age pension plan.

g. Train all Tricycle Drivers to improve and succeed in their life by teaching them to set goals, believe in themselves, develop confidence, be honest in all dealings, develop self-esteem, and learn time management to accomplish more in life.

However, a close scrutiny of the allegations and documents submitted by PPI reveals that it fails to present any document evidencing its membership nationwide. This contradicts its allegation that it is a nationwide association of tricycle drivers.

Moreover, PPI appears not to belong to a marginalized or underrepresented sector within the contemplation of RA 7941. The concerns of PPI may be addressed by or through the appropriate agency or instrumentality of the government.

SPP NO. 03-071 (PL) - ALYANSA NG MGA MIYEMBRO NG SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM (UNITED SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM MEMBER, INC.)

The petitioner failed to show that it is representative of the interests of an identifiable underprivileged and marginalized sector of society as contemplated by the Constitution and RA 7941 and as further explained by the Supreme Court in the case of Ang Bagong Bayani vs. Comelec, G.R. No. 147589, June 26, 2001. In the said case, the Court explained that the political party, sector, organization or coalition must represent the marginalized and underrepresented groups identified in Section 5 of RA 7941 (labor, peasant, fisherfolk, urban poor, indigenous cultural communities, handicapped, elderly, women, youth, veterans, overseas workers and professionals). In other words, it must show, through its Constitution, Articles of Incorporation, By Laws, history, platform of government and track record, that, it represents and seeks to uplift marginalized and underrepresented sectors. It can do this only if majority of its membership should belong to the marginalized and underrepresented. However, the records show that the petitioner declares to represent the 23,000,000 members of the Social Security System (see annexes, the petition and complaint filed with the RTC and MTC, respectively, by the same organization praying for the issuance of a writ of preliminary injunction in the management of SSS funds and assets). It is evident therefore that what the petitioner is actually representing is a cross-section of the whole populace, which has been identified in the petition itself as "all the executive officers, board members, staffs and the nation's 23 million active and retired SSS covered members which include professionals, workers, peasants, elderly, youths, women, and other marginalized and underrepresented group bound together through collective concerns in the promotions of social insurance". The Constitution and RA 7941 do not, by any mode of statutory construction, contemplate such a broad and vague definition of what is marginalized and underrepresented. The petitioner therefore, which seeks to be registered as a sectoral organization, does not appear to represent an identifiable marginalized and/or underrepresented sector which direly needs representation because of the very nature of the group, as properly enumerated in the Constitution and Section 5 of RA 7941.

SPP NO. 03-073 (PL) - ABANTE-TRANSPORT COOP

The petitioner's President, Jaime S. Domdom, is an appointee of the Office of the President (OP) as Chairman of the Office of Transportation Cooperatives (OTC), an attached agency of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC). The participation of government or its officials in the affairs of a party-list candidate is not illegal and unfair to the other parties, but also deleterious to the objective of the law: to enable citizens belonging to the marginalized and underrepresented sectors and organizations to be elected to the House of Representatives.

Additionally, petitioner seeks to represent the labor sector but its membership is composed of "the workers and operators in the transport industry, particularly the members of transport cooperatives consisting of drivers, conductors, mechanics, allied workers and vehicle owners or operators who are members of transport cooperatives (Records, p. 47). Its membership is under the jurisdiction of and governed by the rules on cooperatives as administered by the Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) and not by Labor Code of the Philippines. Moreover, there is no employer-employee relationship between the drivers of transport cooperatives and the cooperative. Hence, petitioner cannot properly seek to represent the labor sector.

SPP NO. 03-080 (PL) - ADVOCATES AND ADHERENTS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ALLIED WORKERS (AASJS)

In its *Petition* filed on 29 August 2003, ASSJS alleged that "it is an organization established for the advancement and protection of the rights and welfare of school teachers and non-academic personnel such as janitors, librarians, electricians, plumbers and security personnel in private educational institutions in the Philippines".

As can be gleaned from its Constitution and By-Laws, AASJS aims to protect the interest of teachers. While this is a worth-emulating intention, it would not qualify AASJS to participate in the party list system since the sector it represents does not belong to a marginalized or underrepresented sector as contemplated by RA 7941.

SPP NO. 03-086 (PL) - ANG KALIPUNAN NG MGA SANDIGAN NG PILIPINAS, INC. (ANG KASAPI PARTY)

ANG KASAPI Party filed its *Petition* on 24 September 2003 wherein it seeks accreditation as National Capital Region (NCR) Regional Party as party list participant in the 10 May 2004 National and Local Elections. It alleged that it was reorganized on April 6, 2003 in order to reconstitute its national movement organization. Attached to its *Petition* are list of its officers and organizers, program of government and its Constitution and By-Laws.

A perusal of the allegations and documents presented by Ang Kasapi Party shows that it does not truly represent any marginalized or underrepresented sector.

SPP NO. 03-091 (PL) - MASA NG PILIPINO

Masa ng Pilipino was founded on August 21, 2002 as evidenced by its Certificate of Incorporation issued by the Securities and Exchange Commission. It seeks to register as a National Sectoral Party representing the group of people such as fisherfolk, peasant, urban poor, farmers, and indigenous cultural communities. It has a nationwide constituency.

It is dedicated to the principle that the people's interest and welfare must always comes first whose principal advocacy pertain to the special interest of the community to develop and harness people's participation in every economic activity toward the development of the community as a whole.

The following are the objectives of Masang Pilipino:

1. *To establish, nationalist and popular government by empowering the people, ensuring their representation and participation in all levels of government decision-making.*
2. *To assert national sovereignty and independence and protect the national patrimony from foreign domination and control.*
3. *To promote self-reliant and sustainable socio-economic development through the integrated programs of genuine land reform, national industrialization and protection of the environment.*
4. *To uphold and protect the people's basic human rights and freedoms and ensure justice for all victims of human rights violation.*
5. *To improve the social economic welfare of workers, peasants and other marginalized sectors by providing a comprehensive and progressive program in basic social services and livelihood.*
6. *To promote a national culture that is progressive, patriotic, scientific popular and develop research and development in science and technology.*
7. *To guarantee the right to self-determination of the Bangsa Moro, Cordillera and other indigenous peoples and ensure their participation in all matters that directly affect them.*
8. *To remove all forms of gender oppression and discrimination against a women and promote their full involvement in national affairs and other fields of endeavor.*
9. *To advance a national comprehensive policy on peace negotiations to address decisively the root causes of the prolonged armed conflict that has historically beset our country.*
10. *To foster a just policy of international relations that is independent peace-oriented and mutually beneficial to our integrity, security and prosperity as a nation.*

As stated in the records of its petition submitted by Masang Pilipino, it has a nationwide constituency, however it failed to attached in their records the list of all its chapter officers and members. There is no showing in its petition where Masang Pilipino obtained their funds and how they can wage a nationwide campaign. Moreover, it did specify what particular sectoral party it seeks to represent under the party list system as enumerated under Section 5 of RA 7941. It appears not to be a marginalized or underrepresented sector.

Hence, it is hereby denied.

SPP NO. 03-094 (PL) - CRUSADERS OF LAW, EQUALITY AND TRUTH

Crusaders of Law, Equality and Truth filed a *Petition for Registration* on 29 September 2003 stating that it seeks to represent the labor and urban and rural poor sectors; that it is not a religious sect or denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes; that it shall not advocate violence or unlawful means to achieve its goals; that it is not an adjunct of, or a project organized, or an entity funded or assisted, by the government; that it is not a foreign party or organization, whether directly or indirectly, or through its officers or members, or indirectly through third parties; that it was established on 13 February 2002 and that it commits to comply with the laws, rules and regulations relating to elections.

It has no concrete program of government that will truly and seriously represent the interest of the marginalized sectors it purportedly represents. Neither does it belong to a marginalized or underrepresented sector.

Thus, this Commission (Second Division) is inclined to deny the petition for registration of Crusaders of Law, Equality and Truth.

SPP NO. 03-100 (PL)- BAGONG MAMAMAYAN ANG DINGGIN (BMAD)

Petitioner Bagong Mamayan ang Dinggin (BMAD) alleged in its petition filed on 30 September 2003 that it is a movement whose membership espouses the concerns of marginalized and underrepresented sectors for our communities to be free from crime, corruption and government efficiency; that it is not religious sect or denomination organization or association organized for religious purposes; that it doe not advocate violence or unlawful means to achieve its goal; that it is not a foreign party or organization and that it does not receive support for partisan political purposes from any foreign government, foreign political party, foundation, organization, whether directly or through any of its officers or members or indirectly through third parties.

BMAD objectives as contained in its Constitution and By-Laws are as follows:

1. *Campaign against all forms of crime, corruption and government inefficiency by organizing and mobilizing mass actions in all provinces nationwide.*
2. *Make the people aware through education programs and activities like symposiums in barangays and/or education in all school levels.*
3. *Proliferate instructional materials such as posters, comic books, magazines and pamphlets.*
4. *Work for the passage of comprehensive and efficient legislations against crime, corruption and government inefficiency especially those that affect our marginalized and underrepresented sectors.*
5. *Create rehabilitation programs for jailed criminals who come from marginalized and underrepresented sectors so that when they are released, they will have an alternative means of livelihood.*
6. *Conduct fundraising projects to support the activities, programs and activities of BMAD.*

Also attached to its petition is an Amended Articles of Incorporation of *Mamayan Ayaw Sa Droga* (MAD) Foundation, Incorporated showing that BMAD was formerly MAD.

A closer look of the pleadings and Constitution and By-Laws of BMAD shows that it does not appear to represent any particular marginalized and underprivileged sectors as mandated by RA 7941. Conversely, it represents diverse groups in our society with concerns about all forms of crimes, drugs, corruption and inefficiency in the government.

Further, the disqualification of MAD (which is now using the name BMAD) for being funded or assisted by the government, was already settled, ruled upon and confirmed by the Supreme Court in the case of *Bagong Bayani, et al. vs. COMELEC, et al.*, G.R. 147589 promulgated on 25 June 2003.

SPP NO. 03-104 (PL) - ANAK MAHIRAP LEARNING CENTER, INC. (Formerly Street Children's Home of Opportunities Learning (S.C.H.O.O.L.)

In its *Petition* filed on 30 September 2003, Anak Mahirap Learning Center, Inc., stated that it is a sectoral party with members consisting of "out of school youths displaced by poverty, civil war and neglect"; that it is not a religious sector denomination, organization or association organized for religious purposes; that it does not advocate violence or unlawful means to achieve its goal; that it is not a foreign party or organization; that it does receive support for partisan political purposes from any foreign government, foreign political party, foundation, organization; that it commits to comply with the law, rules or regulation relating to elections and that it has been in existence for six (6) years.

Since this commission cannot rely on mere allegations, this petition must be dismissed for failure of S.C.H.O.O.L. to present proof that it exists and acquires juridical personality for at least one (1) year pursuant to Section 6(r) of Resolution No. 6320. Besides, it is not clear what marginalized sector it seeks to represent.

SPP NO. 03-106 (PL) - AN WARAY

Petition was filed on September 30, 2003. Petitioner claims to have membership in the majority of municipalities in the provinces of the Eastern Visayas Region (Region VIII), however, the submitted list of local chapters does not have exact address.

Furthermore, the petitioner's claim that their constituents are marginalized or underrepresented is without merit. Every Filipino is presumed to be a resident of a particular district in the country and should therefore be considered as a constituent of the elected political leaders of the district where s/he resides, regardless of his/her region of origin or regional affiliations. Regional aggrupations should not be allowed to participate in the party-list considering that they are already represented in their respective regions and are also represented if they reside in areas outside of their regions. Petitioners should have instead, applied for registration as a political party.

SPP NO. 03-108 (PL) - NOVELTY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND LIVELIHOOD FOR FOOD (NELFFI), INC.

The party claims to be a national organization with 4,000 individual members, however, the same cannot be verified since it only submitted the names of its local chapter coordinators with insufficient addresses. It is not also clear which marginalized and underrepresented sector it is seeking to represent.

Certainly the business or entrepreneurial sector is not the marginalized sector being contemplated by the Constitution. Considering that petitioner has been founded in 1998, its failure to submit a summary of its track record for the past four (4) years does not give flesh to its posturing that it works for the interest of the marginalized sectors identified in its submitted platform or objectives. Petitioner attached in its petition its By-Laws but failed to submit its organization's Constitution or Articles of Incorporation.

SPP NO. 03-110 (PL) - SAY NO TO DRUGS MOVEMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC.

Petitioner does not specifically state the marginalized and underrepresented sector or sectors it seeks to represent. It cannot be ascertained if the sector they seek to represent is marginalized and underrepresented. Furthermore, it cannot be ascertained if majority of its membership belong to the marginalized and underrepresented sector or sectors it seeks to represent.

SPP 03-117 (PL) - ABOT-KAMAY – THE SEARCA FELLOWS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC. (ABOT-KAMAY)

On 30 September 2003, Abot-Kamay filed a *Petition for Registration* alleging that it seeks to represent the marginalized and underrepresented sector of professionals; that it is a regional organization in Region IX; that it is not a religious sect or denomination; that it shall not pursue its goals through violence or other unlawful means; that it shall uphold and adhere to the Philippines Constitution and obey all laws and legal orders and that it is not supported by nor does it accept any financial contribution or material aids from any foreign government and/or their agencies.

Abot-Kamay was issued a Certificate of Incorporation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on 27 September 2001.

An examination of the pleadings and documents presented by Abot-Kamay shows that it does not represent the marginalized sector.

SO ORDERED.

RALPH C. LANTION
Presiding Commissioner

MEHOL K. SADAIN
Commissioner

FLORENTINO A. TUASON, JR.
Commissioner

x————————————————————————x

CERTIFICATION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that the conclusions in the foregoing resolution were reached in consultation by the members of the Commission (Second Division).

RALPH C. LANTION
Presiding Commissioner

(PDI--January 8, 2004)

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Nr UST 3.6M 4br 3tb 1cg Nr bank, Loan Ok Call 645-3731

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Condo/Twnhse Ortigas DBO Call 634-9500

Malayan Plaza ADB Ave. Nr Podium Call 634-9500

ORTIGAS 1BR 520-0075

VV5 3BR 197 FA T634-9500

QUEZON CITY

CUBAO 1.4M 10% DP 9132224

LOT

PASIG

38m² 600T Kapitolyo Homes Bambang 627-3621

RESORT

Pansol Hot Spring priv 7767507

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

CONDO/TWNHSE

PASIG

Twnhse 3BR 2TB Gar 25TH 6321739 1.4Km Fr. Megamall

QUEZON CITY

3B PARALUMAN nr C'wealth 3BR maids qtr; scrnd prkg&tel P13T 9275727

SAN JUAN

1Wilson 2BR 20T 4121825

REAL ESTATE FOR SALE

FARM/FISHPEN/RAWLANDS

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

APARTMENT

MANILA

1557 A. Isip Paco w/ garage 2BR 1TB 5610197 5636296

PARAÑAQUE

8201453 PQUE LOPEZ SUCAT

QUEZON CITY

Cubao 3.8 Std Lady 9124428

2BR BALIC² 7k 7811454

WAREHOUSE/FACTORY

MALABON
Acacia Gov Pascual Ave.
Concrete Warehouse
Area: 1,710.46 sqm.
Rent P75/sqm.
Tels. 818-2781/751-5472

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BUSINESS RENTAL

920-B Luna Mencias St. Mand. City T532-0486 • 532-3126

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LOAN & MORTGAGE

2% W/O TAKING CAR 3677523/24

BUSN DRS OFW 524-3197

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

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WANTED TO BUY

DEFECT TV/COMPO 7325865

TRANSPORTATION FOR SALE

CARS

HONDA

HONDA CVC LXi NOV01 Wht Video Set Up Loaded P515 Mgs17 Rush 09165247001

TOYOTA

TOWNACE VAN 225T 9267383

OTHER CAR BRANDS

Pajero Land Cruiser Surf Delica Space Gear Serena Safari Terrano Mu Previa Town-Hi Ace Vanette Elf Canter etc A1 w/warranty T-in 9120647 09178342020

TRANSPORTATION FOR RENT

CARS FOR RENT

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CARS FOR RENT

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CARS/ VANS/ BRIDAL/ 8969956

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Cheap Van Rental 9330311

L300 741-1356

L300/Vans 578-8917 (Roger)

STAREX 12 seater 7318549

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1.5% Fast Car Loan 3677523/24

1.5% CARLOAN 373-6519

1.5% CARLOAN 788-0357

1.5% CARLOAN 952-2510

1.5% Easy Carloan 7815352/55

1.5% Fast Car Loan 6560140

1.5% w/o Taking Car 6567685

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3732081-82

1.5% w/oTaking Car 3650974/75

•1HR Fast Car Loan 7125202•

2% w/o Taking Car 7262780

2% w/oTaking Car 3731021

2% w/oTaking Car 8966630/33

2% w/oTaking Car 8959454

2% w/oTaking Car 8870490/95

GENERAL ITEMS FOR SALE

OTHER EQUIPMENT

henny penny pressure fryer-used-175,000.00 fry master fryer-deep 4 vat fryer 250,000.00 wolf griddle-4 lanes (new) 165,000.00 •Alden Ching CP# 0917-5373744•

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PUBLIC NOTICES

ANNOUNCEMENT

CAREGIVER TRAINING 5271590

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given of the extrajudicial settlement of the estate of WILFREDO V. WASAN w/waiver of shares executed by the heirs on Dec. 22, 2003 acknowledged bef. Notary Public Atty. Elsa V. Perlas of Pasig City entered in her notarial register as Doc. 2160, Page 53, Book CVIII, Series of 2003.
(PDI-Dec. 25, Jan. 1, & 8, 2004)

PERSONAL

The following Novena must be said nine times a day for nine consecutive days: "O, Holy St. Jude Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue, rich in miracles, near kinsman to Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor of all who invoke your special patronage in time of need. To you I have recourse from the depth of my heart, I humbly beg your great power to come to my assistance. Help me in my present and most urgent need. In return, I promise to make your name known and cause you to be invoked. Saint Jude, pray for us and all who invoke thy aid." Please don't forget to publish this once your wish is granted.

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

LEARN & BE IN BUSINESS! Meat Processing (10Recipes)/ Herbal Soap&Detergent Making Jan 25 724-7990 • 725-2936

UN DP

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Consulting Services for the Institutional Strengthening of the Sharia's Justice System for the GOP – UN Multi-Donor Programme Phase 3 (PHI/01/001)

The Development Support Services Center (DSSC) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invites consultants to apply for eligibility and to bid for the "Institutional Strengthening of the Shari'a Justice System", a sub-contract under the GOP-UN Multi-Donor Programme Phase 3 (PHI/01/001).

The project is intended to strengthen the institutional set-up of the Shari'a justice system, to compliment the other reform efforts being spearheaded and undertaken by the Supreme Court under its Action Program for Judicial Reform (2001 – 2006) aimed at strengthening the courts as a pillar of thejustice system.

For interested parties, Bid Documents (Eligibility Requirements), Instructions to Bidders and Terms of Reference) may be secured personally, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of PhP500.00 from the following address:

Development Support Services Center
United Nations Development Programme
7th Floor, NEDA sa Makati Building
106 Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, 1229 Makati City
Tel. No. (632) 892-0611 loc. 275
Email Address : bc_admin.ph@undp.org

The abovementioned Bid Documents will be released to all interested participants starting January 12, 2004 to January 16, 2004 only. The Bid Documents shall contain all instructions on the rules, procedures, bid opening dates and other schedules for this activity.

UNDP reserves the right to reject any or all the bids, waive any defect or informality therein, accept the bid and award the contract to the most advantageous offer to the UNDP, for and in behalf of the Supreme Court. UNDP assumes no responsibility to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred for the preparation of bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) ETHELIND B. CAPUNO
Manager, DSSC

This advertisement is also posted in the UNDP Phillippines website from January 8, 2004 to January 16, 2004.

(PDI – January 8, 2004)

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

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NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF UNSERVICEABLE AND JUNK ITEMS

AS IS, WHERE IS BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING . January 27, 28 and 29, 2004, 2:00 PM
The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following junk and unserviceable items:

SCHEDULE – I: January 27, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, QC

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot scrap metals consisting of s/s equipment, valves, radiators, bushings, coils, boiler tubes, pulleys, breaker mechanisms, cylinder blocks heater elements, deep well pumps, electrical panels, lifting beams, crane extension jig, three (3) crates of assorted automotive and plant parts and other scrap items located at Bataan TPP, Limay Bataan.	P 575,500.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot condenser tubes, various sizes and lengths, copper-nickel and aluminum brass, 6 096 pcs located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan.	P 2,131,500.00/lot
3.	One (1) unit junk and unserviceable, FMC crane, 50-tonner located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan.	P 660,000.00/lot
4.	One (1) lot unserviceable conveyor belt, steel and nylon belted, various length located at Masinloc CFTPP, Masinloc, Zambales	P 247,000.00/lot
* 5.	Waste lube oil, approximately 300 drums, located at Masinloc CFTPP	P 400.00/drum
* 6.	Sludge oil, Bunker-C, approximately 70 drums, located at Masinloc, CFTPP (Drums are not included in item nos 5 and 6)	P 200.00/drum

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – II: January 28, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, Diliman, QC

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	One (1) lot of scrap metals and junk items consisting of KIA Ceres Van, KIA pick-up, Mazda pick-up, Mazda van, Nissan pick-up, Anshan Bus, Toyota Corona and Tamaraw, pipes, steel plates, drums, gas compressors, Ebara pumps, Mc Quay Water Chillers, main oil tanks, induction motors, automotive batteries-63 pcs., photo copier-1 unit, used tires-144 pcs and other junk items located at Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2	P 642,560.00/lot
* 2	Waste oil, approximately 300 drums located at Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2, (drums are not included)	P 262.50/drum
3	One (1) lot scrap metals and copper located at Malaya TPP tank farm and warehouse, Pililla, Rizal	P 143,000.00/lot
4.	One (1) lot of scrap metals consisting of black pipes, unserviceable current transformer, cooling tower parts, channels, power cables and other scrap items located within the barricaded area of Mak-Ban GPP, Plant C and Plant Nursery, Bo. Bitin, Bay, Laguna	P 1,219,500.00/lot
5.	Barite, approximately 4, 114 bags, 100 lbs/bags, located at Mak-Ban GPP, Bo. Bitin, Bay Laguna	P 326.00/bag
6	One (1) lot splatter board made of plastics, approximately 10,000 kgs located at Mak-Ban GPP, Bo. Bitin, Bay, Laguna	P 2.00/kg

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

SCHEDULE – III: January 29, 2004, 2:00 PM, MMD Bidding Room, Bldg-1, NPC-HO, (Re-bidding)

Item No.	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	One (1) unit unserviceable, retired, cannibalized power transformer w/ out oil and 13 segments of used stator coils located at Sucat Thermal Power Plants, Muntinlupa City.	P 650,000.00/lot
2.	One (1) unit unserviceable, retired and cannibalized electric generating set "CKD" Brand, 448 KW rating, Unit No. 5 of Bantayan DPP, Bantayan, Cebu	P 472,000.00
3.	One (1) lot unserviceable, retired and junk stationary equipment consisting of 25 units and 2 units heavy equipment of 25 units and 2 units heavy equipment located at Bulalo 30 PGI Stockyard Mak-Ban GPP Bo. Bitin, Bay Laguna	P 730,000.00/lot
* 4.	One (1) lot of sludge oil consisting of residual fuel, sediments and water, approximately 67,557 liters, contained in drums and Fuel oil tank no. 7 located at Bataan TPP, Limay, Bataan (Sale is on Clean-up Basis)	P 34,000.00/lot
* 5	One (1) lot used transformer of approximately 10, 000 liters located at Botocan HEP, Majayjay, Laguna	P 80,000.00/lot

* DENR permit is required for participating bidders

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:
1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN OF THE BIDDER OR FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE COMPANY (2002, original or certified true copy of BIR).

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for the said bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return.
Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/schedule from Mr. S.V. Lomuntad, Jr. at Bldg 1 Ground Floor, NPC Head Office, corner Agham Rd and Quezon Ave Diliman, Q.C. or call tel. no. 924-5384.
Interested parties for Schedule II, item nos. 1&2, scrap items and waste oil, the bidding shall be conducted simultaneously at NPC Palimpinon Extension office, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental and the NPC Head Office. Visayas bidders may secure bid from P500.00 for the said schedule from Mr. Rodolfo C. Pascaña, Plant Manager, Palimpinon GPP 1 & 2.
Deadline for issuance of bid form is 4:30 PM January 26, 2004 for Sch-I, January 27, 2004 for Sch-II and January 28, 2004 for Sch-III.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC MMD

(PDI – January 8, 9 & 10, 2004)

TENDER

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200 HP GORDON PIATT 3 PASS WET BACK BOILER
Model F14.9-0-30 - (1996)
Located: Laguna, Philippines

Including: -
ATLAS COPCO Compressor w/ 3hp Drive Motor
Fuel Oil Day Tank (400 liters cap.) w/ 1.5hp Transfer Pump (excludes meter)
Feed Water Tank (1,000 liters cap.) (excludes dosing pump)
Feed Water Pumps 5.5hp
Water Softeners

Deadline for submission of bids: 16th January 2004 - 12:00 noon
Viewing is strictly by Appointment
For more details please contact Mr. Obert Cinco - Tel: 852 2910

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HENRY BUTCHER INTERNATIONAL PHILIPPINES INC.

Send your resumé instantly. JOB

CHRISTOPHER JAMES CUBIS TUASON

November 5, 1974 – January 7, 2004

His bereaved mother **Karen**; father **Conkoy**; brothers **Gutsy**, **Sev** and **Daniel** and sister **Lexy** request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains will lie in state at the Santuario De San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati City.

Interment will be on Friday, January 9, 2004.

O Virgin of virgins, my Mother,
I choose you as my guide and protectress.
I have complete trust in you.
Be with me today and everyday, and
especially at the hour of my death. Amen.

On the 40th day of

Atty. Galicano (Nonong) A. Calapatia, Jr.'s

going home to His Creator, the following masses will be offered for him:

8:00 a.m.	Antipolo Cathedral, P. Oliveros St., Antipolo
6:00 p.m.	Santuario de San Antonio, Forbes Park, Makati
6:00 a.m.	Sta. Teresita del Niño Hesus Church, Kanlaon St., Q.C.
6:15 a.m.	Immaculate Concepcion Church, Damar Village, Q.C.
6:30 a.m.	National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, Kanlaon St., Q.C.
6:00 a.m.	Sto. Domingo Church, Q.C.
5:30 p.m.	Our Lady of EDSA Shrine, Q.C.
6:30 p.m.	Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Makati
12:15 p.m.	Chapel of the Eucharistic Lord, SM Megamall
6:00 a.m.	Queen of Peace Church, Bacolod City

"You will always be in our hearts, Papa"

In Loving Memory
on the
Tenth Death Anniversary
of

Jose Ma. L. Javellana

who passed away on January 8, 1993

His loving wife **Consuelo**; children & children-in-law, grandchildren & great grandchildren, request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass shall be offered at the following Churches:

Santuario de San Antonio Parish *(Forbes Park, Makati)*	7:30 a.m. 12:15 p.m. 6:00 p.m.
Don Bosco Parish *(Pasay Road, Makati)*	7:30 a.m. 12:15 p.m. 6:00 p.m.
Christ the King *(Greenmeadows, Quezon City)*	7:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.
San Sebastian Cathedral *(Bacolod)*	6:00 a.m. 5:15 p.m.
Sacred Heart Shrine *(Bacolod)*	6:00 a.m. 5:30 p.m.
Redemptorist Church *(Bacolod)*	6:15 a.m. 5:30 p.m.

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6

The Order of Friars Minor of the
Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista
announces the passing away of

FR. FERNANDO BRAÑA, OFM

who died on January 4, 2004 at the age of 51.

His remains will be transferred from Guimbal, Iloilo to Santuario de San Pedro Bautista, San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City on the afternoon of January 11, 2004. Daily celebration of the eucharist will be offered at 8:00 o'clock in the evening.

Interment will be on January 13, 2004 (Tuesday) after the Funeral Mass at 1:30 p.m. at Santuario de San Pedro Bautista, San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City.

"Praised be my Lord, through our sister bodily death."
St. Francis of Assisi

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• DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS
• DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS

CLASSIFIEDS

HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION
GUARANTY AND CREDIT INSURANCE GROUP

INVITATION TO BID

The HOME GUARANTY CORPORATION (HGC) hereby invites offers to purchase by way of cash sealed bids on the following property/ies located at the Manila Harbour Centre, Radial Rd. 10, Vitas, Tondo, Manila.

A. INDUSTRIAL LOTS

ITEM NO.	BLOCK NO.	LOT AREA	LOT AREA (sqm.)	MINIMUM BID PRICE
1	2	6	5,000.00	105,000,000.00
2	2	7	5,000.00	105,000,000.00
3	4	10	10,000.00	205,000,000.00

B. COMMERCIAL LOTS

4	6	30	257.89	5,544,635.00
5	16	2	2,458.40	55,314,000.00
6	16	3	2,455.40	55,246,500.00
7	17	4	3,319.70	73,033,400.00
8	18	8	419.48	9,018,820.00
9	18	9	419.48	9,018,820.00
10	18	10	419.48	9,018,820.00
11	19	10	373.37	8,027,455.00
12	19	13	373.37	8,027,455.00
13	19	14	373.37	8,027,455.00

A bidder's bond equivalent to ten (10%) percent of the total bid price in the form of cash or certified manager's/cashier's check-payable to HGC will be required of all prospective bidders.

The bidder is advised to inspect the property/ies subject of public bidding to see for himself its/their actual condition. All properties are being sold on "as is" basis. Particulars may be obtained from the Cashflow Guaranty Dept. / Developmental Guaranty Dept. at the 4th Flr., Jade Bldg., 335 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City or call 897-3310 or 897-3488.

Sealed bids must be received on or before 2:00 p.m. on January 15, 2004 at the HGC Head Office Ground Flr., Jade Bldg., 335 Sen. Gil Puyat AVe., Makati City.

THE CORPORATION RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL OFFER, TO WAIVE ANY DEFECTS THEREIN OR TO ACCEPT SUCH OFFERS AS MAY BE CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE CORPORATION.

(Sgd.) **RAFAEL P. DELOS SANTOS**
Chairman
Bids and Award Committee

(PDI – January 6, 7 & 8, 2004)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDE AUTHORITY
4th Floor, Building B, NIA Complex, EDSA Quezon City
Tel. Nos. 922-3371 • 926-5877 • 922-3368 • 929-6071 loc. 123
Telefax 922-3364 • 922-3355
E-mail address: fpa_77@yahoo.com
Website: www.fadinap.org.philippines
P.O. Box 2582, Q.C.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority (FPA) has issued and adopted the 2nd edition, as amended, of the FPA Pesticide Regulatory Policies and Implementing Guidelines and Procedures, a compilation of policy guidelines, memoranda, circulars and other rules and regulations on pesticide, and has submitted copies of the same to the Office of the National Administrative Register of the UP Law Center Pursuant to Section 3, Book VII of the Revised Administrative Code of 1987. Copies of the same are available at the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority with office at the 4th Floor, Building B, NIA Compound, EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City and at the Office of the National Administrative Register, UP Law Center, Diliman, Quezon City.

(Sgd.) **DARIO C. SABULARSE, Ph.D. CESO IV**
Officer-in-Charge
Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority

(PDI - Jan 6 2004)

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Maria Clara Lobregat y Lorenzo

Mayor of Zamboanga City

Died in the Grace of our Lord on January 2, 2004 at the age of 82.

Widow of **Celso Lobregat**, Her children **Concepcion** and **Ramon Balaguer**, **Celso** and **Nona**, **Maria Luisa** (†), **Pablo** and **Ma. Angela**, **Jose** and **Cristina**, **Lourdes**, **Jerome** and **Ma. Cristina**; her brothers and sisters **Isabel** (†), **Pablo** and **Milagros**, **Maria Luisa** (†), **Luis** (†), and **Alicia**; her sisters-in-law **Rosario L. Legarda** and **Carmen L. Menendez**; grandchildren **Ramon**, **Nuki**, **Pati**, **Clara** and **Nadia Balaguer**, **Looie**, **Marco**, **Paolo**, **Natalia**, **Rocio**, **Ines**, **Martina**, **Cristina**, **Tito**, **Sophia**, **Javier** and **Ignacio Lobregat**, **Carlos**, **Ana** and **Miguel Zozobrado**; nephews, nieces and other family members request your prayers for the eternal rest of her soul.

After the necrological services and Mass at the House of Representatives today, her body will be brought to the Santuario de San Antonio.

Requiem Mass will be on Saturday, January 10, 2004 at 9:00 a.m. at the Santuario de San Antonio. Interment will follow at the Manila Memorial Park.

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies, and whoever believes in Me will never die." **John 11:25-26**

Ma. Lorraine Cruz Gubaton

Peacefully joined our Creator on January 2, 2004 at the age of 24.

In loving memory of her parents **Sixto & Zenaida**, *her sister* **Charmagne**, *brothers*, **Jek-Jek, Jayson & JM**, *relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.*

Her body lies in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on January 11, 2004 at 8:00 a.m.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

Our Dear Beloved Mama

Teodora S. Sanvictores

Died in the Grace of our Lord on the 5th day of January 2004 at the age of 74.

Her loving husband **Manoling**, children: **Sammy & Daisy De La Cruz**, **Susan** and **Toti Vibal**, **Sheila**, **Sonia** and **Jerry Rojas** and grandchildren: **Elgin & Wendy Flores**, **Jericho**, **Kris**, **Eunice**, **Claudine**, **Kenneth** and other relative & friends, request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

There will be a Service on Saturday, 10th day of January 2004 at 9 a.m. at the Lucena Bible Church. Interment will follow at the Lucena City Memorial Park.

ATTY. ROLANDO T. PARAGAS

Died peacefully on January 6, 2004 at the age of 60.

His mother **Martha**; loving wife **Cha-Cha**; sons **Lex** and **Engr. Ron**; daughters **Charo** and **Faye**; brothers **Abet**, **Wowie**, **Bing**; sisters **Nayda**, **Delma**, **Portia**; nephews, nieces, in-laws and relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at St. Peter Memorial Chapels, Inc. 296 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City and will be transferred at their residence at #65 Pob. Sur, Bayambang, Pangasinan on January 10, 2004.

Interment to be announced later.

Our Dearly Beloved

Ana "Nene" Ho Martinez

(Wife of the late Salvador "Suyong" Sun Martinez, Sr.)
of Cagayan de Oro City
peacefully joined her Creator
on 04 January 2004
at the age of 80.

Her children Vivien (†), Salvador & Esperanza, Victoria & Robert Abad, Emmanuel & Alice, Violeta & George Go, Vilma & William Co & grandchildren Sean, Therese, Abigail, Annabel, Johanna, Christopher, Jonathan, Lawrence, Walter, Francis, Matthew, Michelle, Mark, relatives & friends are requesting prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains will lie in state starting 8 January 2004 at the Cosmopolitan Funeral Homes, Cagayan de Oro City.

Interment will follow the Funeral Mass (Tagoloan Parish Church) at 9:00 a.m. on **Monday, 12 January 2004** at the **Tagoloan Cemetery, Misamis Oriental.**

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.
Always caring... **INQUIRER OBITUARIES**
WE ACCEPT CREDIT CARDS and bank-to-bank payments
OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ❶ Copy of Death Certificate ❷ Any identification document (I.D.)
DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

SM CINEMA

SM Dial-A-Movie 833-9999

NOW SHOWING

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

1	MANO PO 2
2	BRIDAL SHOWER
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	GAGAMBOY
8	FILIPINAS

SM CITY CEBU

1	CRYING LADIES
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	GAGAMBOY
4	FILIPINAS
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	MANO PO 2
7	MALIKMATA
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY BACOOR

1	FILIPINAS
2	MANO PO 2
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	GAGAMBOY
7	MALIKMATA
8	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY PAMPANGA

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	FILIPINAS

SM BICUTAN

1	GAGAMBOY
2	MALIKMATA
3	MANO PO 2
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MARILAO

1	MALIKMATA
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	GAGAMBOY

SM STA. MESA

1	MANO PO 2
2	MALIKMATA
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	FANTASTIC MAN
6	GAGAMBOY
7	CRYING LADIES
8	BRIDAL SHOWER
9	GAGAMBOY
10	FILIPINAS

SM SOUTHMALL

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FILIPINAS
3	CRYING LADIES
4	CAPTAIN BARBELL
5	GAGAMBOY
6	BNDAL SHOWER
7	MALIKMATA
8	FANTASTIC MAN
9	GAGAMBOY
10	MANO PO 2

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	GAGAMBOY
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	BRIDAL SHOWER
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	FANTASTIC MAN
7	MANO PO 2
8	CRYING LADIES
9	GAGAMBOY
10	MALIKMAFA
11	BRIDAL SHOWER
12	FILIPINAS

SM CITY DAVAO

1	MANO PO 2
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	FILIPINAS
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	CRYING LADIES

SM CITY LUCENA

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	MANO PO 2
4	GAGAMBOY

SM MEGAMALL

1	MANO PO 2 RESERVE-A-SEAT dial 6356363
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2
5	BRIDAL SHOWER
6	GAGAMBOY
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	CRYING LADIES
9	MALIKMATA
10	FANTASTIC MAN
11	GAGAMBOY
12	FILIPINAS

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN

1	CAPTAIN BARBELL
2	CRYING LADIES
3	FANTASTIC MAN
4	BRIDAL SHOWER

SM CITY ILOILO

1	MALIKMATA
2	RESERVED
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2
7	RESERVED
8	CAPTAIN BARBELL

SM CITY MANILA

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	FANTASTIC MAN
3	MANO PO 2
4	GAGAMBOY
5	MALIKMATA
6	CRYING LADIES
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	FILIPINAS
9	CAPTAIN BARBELL
10	CRYING LADIES
11	GAGAMBOY
12	MALIKMATA

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CRYING LADIES
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
4	MANO PO 2

SM CITY BAGUIO

1	MANO PO 2
2	MALIKMATA
3	CRYING LADIES
4	GAGAMBOY

THE PODIUM CINEMA

16 ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City • 638 9781 - 85

1	CRYING LADIES 12:20 FS/12:50 MF/3:15/5:40/8:05/10:00 LFS/10:35 LMF/12:30 END
2	BRIDAL SHOWER 11:30 FS/12:00 MF/2:40/5:20/8:00/10:15 LFS/10:40 LMF/12:55 END

For Seat Reservation call 633 8975 • LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

Matinee P100.00 - Screening until 5pm • Monday thru Friday • Regular P120.00 - After 5pm • Saturday • Sunday • Holidays Reserved Seating

Movies are subject to change without prior notice

MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS

@ Robinsons Malls

TOP MOVIE THEATER
Annual National
Consumer's Quality Award 2003

NOW SHOWING

DIAL-A-MOVIE FOR ALL BRANCHES 635-5555

Galleria

632- 9115- 16
687-0593

THX /All Digital

1	CRYING LADIES 11.10 1:45. 4 20 6:55. 9.30
2	MANO PO 2 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
3	CAPTAIN BARBELL 11:30, 2:05, 4:40 7:15, 9:50
4	FANTASTIC MAN 10.35, 12:50, 3.05, 5:20, 7:35, 9 50
5	BRIDAL SHOWER 11:10, 1:50. 4.30 7:10, 9:50
6	GAGAMBOY 10:20, 12 40, 3.00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00
7	HOMECOMING 12.20, 2 30, 4:40, 6.50, 9:00
8	MALIKMATA 12 30, 2 45 5 00, 7:15 9 30
9	FILIPINAS 12 40, 3 00. 5 20, 7 40 10 00
10	CRYING LADIES [illegible] 15, 4 50, 7.25, 10 0

MATINEE PRICE: P100 THX cinema / P75 Regular cinemas Mon.- Fri. / 10am- 4pm (EXCEPT HOLIDAYS)

Ermita

520-7185
536-7809 to 12

1 MANO PO 2 - 11:10 1:50, 4 30, 7:10, 10:00
2 FANTASTIC MAN - 10:10, 12:30, 2 50, 5.10, 7.30, 10:00
3 MALIKMATA - 10:40, 12.50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9.50
4 BRIDAL SHOWER - 10:10, 12.30, 2:50, 5 10, 7.30, 10:00
5 CAPTAIN BARBEL - 10:10, 12:30, 2.50, 5.10, 7:30, 10:00
6 GAGAMBOY - 10:10, 12:30, 2:50, 5:10, 7:30, 10:00
7 CRYING LADIES - 10:10, 12.30, 2:50, 5 10, 7.30 10:00

Metro East

Marcos hway

682-8193-99
682-8280

1	MALIKMATA
2	BRIDAL SHOWER
3	MANO PO 2
4	FILIPINAS
5	CRYING LADIES
6	CAPTAIN BARBELL
7	FANTASTIC MAN
8	GAGAMBOY

Novaliches

935-3229 / 31

1	FANTASTIC MAN
2	FILIPINAS
3	MALIKMATA
4	CRYING LADIES
5	CAPTAIN BARBELL
6	MANO PO 2
7	BRIDAL SHOWER
8	GAGAMBOY

Cainta

Ortigas Ext.

240-4461

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CRYING LADIES
3	GAGAMBOY
4	FANTASTIC MAN

Malabon

288-0985•2575

1	CRYING LADIES
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	BRIDAL SHOWER
4	GAGAMBOY

Sta. Rosa (049)837-0907		Lipa, Batangas (043)757-3604 312-5670
FANTASTIC MAN	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
MALIKMATA	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
GAGAMBOY	4	MALIKMATA
CAPTAIN BARBELL	5	CRYING LADIES

Dasmariñas (046)8522125		Imus (046)471-8188 : 875-5058
GAGAMBOY	1	FANTASTIC MAN
CRYING LADIES	2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
FANTASTIC MAN	3	CRYING LADIES
CAPTAIN BARBELL	4	MANO PO 2
MALIKMATA	5	FILIPINAS
	6	GAGAMBOY

Bacolod (034)441-0458-59		Iloilo (033)336-8070 to 78
MANO PO 2	1	MANO PO 2
FILIPINAS	2	FILIPINAS
GAGAMBOY	3	CAPTAIN BARBELL
CRYING LADIES	4	BRIDAL SHOWER
MALIKMATA	5	GAGAMBOY
ELF	6	CRYING LADIES

Star Mills

(045)875-1927
(045)961-5270

1	BRIDAL SHOWER
2	CAPTAIN BARBELL
3	FILIPINAS
4	GAGAMBOY
5	CRYING LADIES
6	MANO PO 2

MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE MMFF 2003

MTRCB RATING R-13 STRICTLY FOR 13 YEARS OF AGE AND ABOVE

NOW SHOWING

TRULY DELIGHTFUL ! THE TALK OF THE TOWN !

DINA BONNEVIE CHERRY PIE PICACHE FRANCINE PRIETO CHRISTIAN VAZQUEZ RODEL VELAYO BOOTS ANSON ROA GINA PAREÑO

Bridal Shower

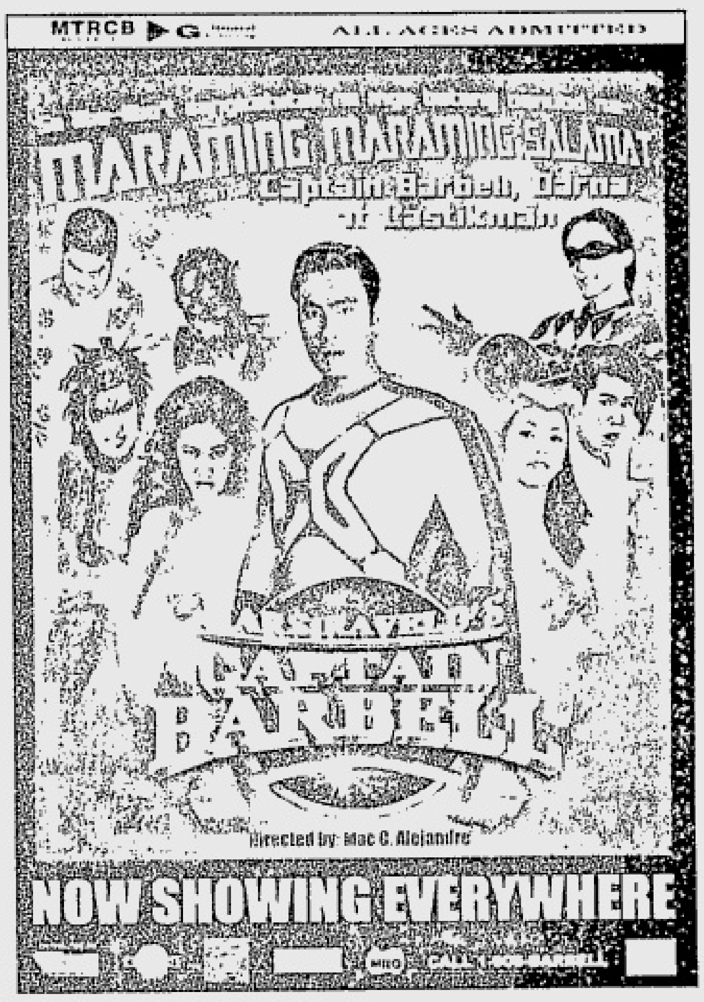
"Funny, Sexy, Sophisticated. The cast is lovable." -Mario Hernando, Malaya

"Absolutely the most enjoyable film among all entries!" -Billy Balbastro, Abante

"This movie heralds the renaissance of new Pinoy sex-comedy." -Jenina Ali, Phil. Daily Inquirer

"Bridal Shower succeeds in making us roar with laughter. A must-see!" -Mario Bautista, People's J.

Directed by JEFFREY JETURIAN SEIKO FILMS Production



MTRCB G ALL AGES ADMITTED

MARAMING MARAMING SALAMAT
Captain Barbell, Darna at Lastikman
CAPTAIN BARBELL

Directed by: Mac C. Alejandre

NOW SHOWING EVERYWHERE

MTRCB G ALL AGES ADMITTED

BEST PICTURE
(Gatpuno Antonio J. Villegas Cultural Awardee)
Best Actress- Maricel Soriano
Best Actor- Richard Gomez
(Smart People's Choice for Best Actor)
Best Supporting Actor- Victor Neri
Best Screenplay- Roy Iglesias

Wagi sa Awards!
Wagi sa puso ng pamilyang Pilipino!

Filipinas

THEATRE MALL GREENHILLS

NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 1 BRIDAL SHOWER - R13 11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00 Advance Selling - LOTR 3 (P150)

CINEMA 2 CRYING LADIES - P13 11:00, 1:15, 3:30, 5:45, 8:00 Advance Screening 10:30pm (LOTR3)

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

MUSIC MUSEUM JAN 9 2004 "KYLA RECALL" 8:30 PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS CALL: 721-6726 OR 721-0635

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POWER PLANT CINEMA

Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

BRIDAL SHOWER R13 2:10, 4:50, 7:30, 10:10	GAGAMBOY GP 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00	MANO PO 2 GP 12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00
CRYING LADIES PG13 12:20, 2:50, 5:20, 7:50, 10:20	BRIDAL SHOWER R13 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30	FILIPINAS GP 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

MATINEE P80.00 - FREE SEATING - SCREENINGS BEFORE 5 PM - MON. TO FRI.

ALL DIGITAL SOUND AYALA CINEMAS PRESENTS

G1 GLORIETTA 1	G4 GLORIETTA 4	GB1 GREENBELT 1	GB3 GREENBELT 3	ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER
1 MANO PO 2	1 MANO PO 2	ArtFilm 1 GAGAMBOY	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 1 MANO PO 2 12:30 3:00 5:30 8:00 10:30	THX 1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN	2 FILIPINAS	2 BRIDAL SHOWER	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 2 CRYING LADIES 1:10 4:00 6:30 9:00 11:30	2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 BRIDAL SHOWER	THX GUARANTEED SEATS 3 BRIDAL SHOWER	M. BUTTERFLY Jan 9, 10 & 11	GUARANTEED SEATS 3 FILIPINAS 1:30 4:00 6:30 9:00 11:30	3 MANO PO 2
4 CAPTAIN BARBEL	4 MALIKMATA		GUARANTEED SEATS 4 BRIDAL SHOWER 12:15 3:00 5:45 8:30 11:15	4 FILIPINAS
	5 GAGAMBOY		GUARANTEED SEATS 5 MALIKMATA 1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30	5 GAGAMBOY
	6 CRYING LADIES			
	7 CAPTAIN BARBEL			

For sreening times, call 729-7777. Movies are subject to change without prior notice. Reserve your seats by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 and send to 2333. Or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations!

THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

MANILA	
EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	SEX BOMB / RAMPADORA
ODEON	X-MEN 2
ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SEX LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAYLAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	BRIDAL SHOWER
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	BRIDAL SHOWER
B	GAGAMBOY
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	BIKTIMA
CINEMA-2	ALIPIN
CINEMA-3	WAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	MR. SUAVE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	LORD OF THE RINGS 1
CINEMA-6	CHAVIT
CINEMA-7	BABAE SA BREAKWATER
CINEMA-8	ASBOOBS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	LOST ISLAND
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	LORDS OF THE RINGS 2
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	STAR RUNNER
CINEMA-12	CABIN FEVER
CINEMA-14	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-15	ELF
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	OUT OF TIME
CINEMA-1	JEEPERS CREEPERS 2
CINEMA-2	FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
CINEMA-4	COLD CREEK MANOR
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

LOTR: The Return of the King- Tie with SPIDERMAN as fastest film to reach $300m in motion picture history.

#1 movie for third consecutive week.

"I can't carry it (the ring), but I can carry you, Frodo!"

THIS WEEKEND Movie fans across North America rang in the new year the same way they did the last two times - by flocking to theaters to see the latest saga in The Lord of the Rings trilogy. The Return of the King presided over a top ten that showed little change compared to last weekend with only one new face, the comedy Calendar Girls, entering the list. Declines were generally modest for films over the post-New Years frame with the overall marketplace showing improvement over last year giving 2004 a solid start.

For the third straight weekend, The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King is the KING of the box office collecting an estimated $30.8M for a mild drop of 39%. That gives Peter Jackson's concluding chapter a 19-day tally of $292M which stands 12% better than the cume of last year's The Two Towers after the same amount of days.

The Return of the King will now try to reach the $300M mark by Tuesday which would allow it to tie Spider-Man as the fastest film in history to hit the triple-century mark.

The most awaited film of the New Year
opens on Jan. 9, 2004
in over 300 theaters nationwide.

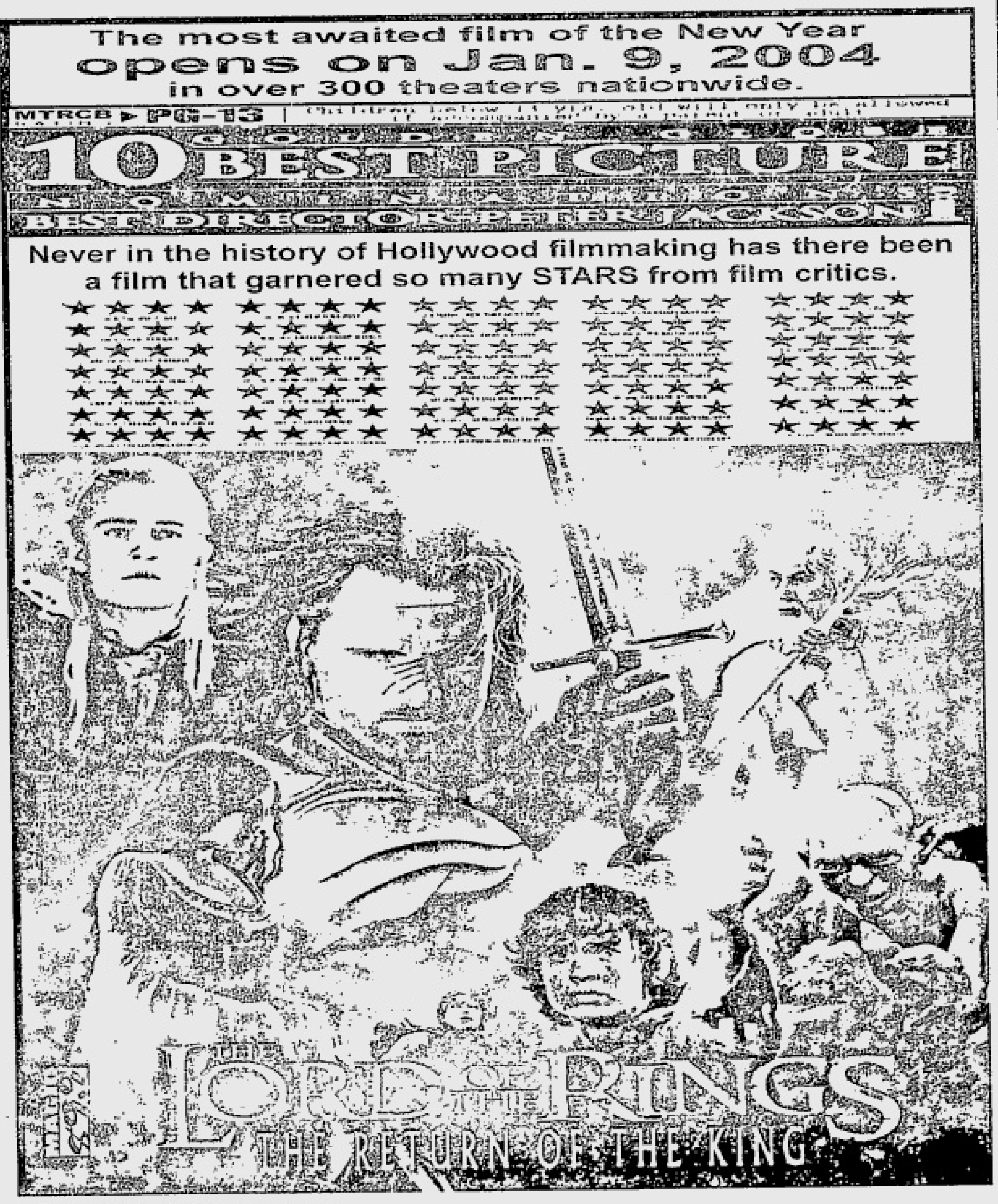
MTRCB ▸ PG-13 | Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult

10 BEST PICTURE

BEST DIRECTOR PETER JACKSON

Never in the history of Hollywood filmmaking has there been a film that garnered so many STARS from film critics.

★★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★


THE LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

MMTA

METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

EMAIL: mmta@asia.com

Filinvest Festival Cinema

(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 MALIKMATA
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2
5 CRYING LADIES
6 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
7 MANO PO-2
8 CRYING LADIES
9 BRIDAL SHOWER
10 GAGAMBOY

Eastwood Cinemas

(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72

1 CRYING LADIES
2 MANO PO
3 BRIDAL SHOWER
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Masagana Cinema 2000

(Pasay) tel 833.3290 833.3274

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN

Starmall Movies

www.clickthecity.com.ph (Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 GAGAMBOY
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
FANTASTIC MAN
3 CAPT. BARBEL
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) MANO PO-2
5

Metropolis Star

www.clickthecity.com.ph (Alabang) tel 850.4285

1 GAGAMBOY
2 CRYING LADIES
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 BRIDAL SHOWER
5 MALIKMATA
6 CAPT. BARBEL

Star

www.clickthecity.com.ph (Las Pinas) tel 873.5004

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 CAPT. BARBEL

PREMIERE CINEMA

(Makati City) tel 892.2503 THX

Centre Plaza Cinema

(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 MALIKMATA
2 CAPT. BARBEL

Sunshine

(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 GAGAMBOY

GOTESCO CINEMA

Gotesco City

(Manila) tel 734.8588

5 GAGAMBOY
6 CAPT. BARBEL
7 CRYING LADIES
8 FANTASTIC MAN
9 BRIDAL SHOWER

Gotesco Grand Central

(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1 MANO PO-2
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 GAGAMBOY
5 MALIKMATA
6 CRYING LADIES
7 CAPT BARBEL
8 BRIDAL SHOWER
9 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Gotesco Commonwealth

tel 951.0083

1 CAPT BARBEL
2 BRIDAL SHOWER
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 GAGAMBOY
5 MANO PO-2

Gotesco Ortigas

tel 656.6795

1 GAGAMBOY
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 CAPT. BARBEL
4 MANO PO-2
5 BRIDAL SHOWER

Universal

(Manila) tel 733.2470

1 RESERVE

Dilson

(Manila) tel 734.7724

Dilson FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
Lords BRIDAL SHOWER

Mandaluyong

tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA
3 GAGAMBOY
4 CAPT. BARBEL

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto SUPER CINERAMA

tel 733.4238

1 MANO PO-2
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Berma Cinema

(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 GAGAMBOY

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT Araneta Center

1 GAGAMBOY
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 CAPT. BARBEL
4 CRYING LADIES
5 MALIKMATA
6 MANO PO-2
7 BRIDAL SHOWER
8
9

Jade Cinema

(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 FANTASTIC MAN
2 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
3 MANO PO-2
4 CAPT BARBEL

Cine Nepo

(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cine Nepo

(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 MANO PO-2
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall

(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1 GAGAMBOY
2 CAPT. BARBEL
3 BRIDAL SHOWER

Cinema 2000 Waltermart

(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 MANO PO-2

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall

(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix

(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 GAGAMBOY
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 CRYING LADIES

Cinema 2000 Metrotown

(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 CRYING LADIES
2 GAGAMBOY
3 FANTASTIC MAN
4 FILIPINAS KONG MAHAL

Cinema 2000 Waltermart

(Plaridel)

1 CRYING LADIES
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY

Lianas Cinema

(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 MALIKMATA
2 FANTASTIC MAN
3 GAGAMBOY
4 BRIDAL SHOWER

Lianas MovieCity

(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 CRYING LADIES
3 MALIKMATA
4 GAGAMBOY
5 FANTASTIC MAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema

(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1 BRIDAL SHOWER
2 MALIKMATA

Olivarez Los Baños

tel (049) 249.2558

1 CAPT. BARBEL
2 GAGAMBOY
3 FANTASTIC MAN

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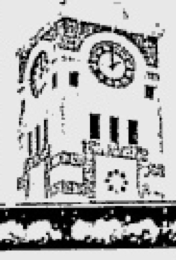

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BUSINESS

BIR collects ₱424.27B, exceeds '03 target

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue yesterday reported that it exceeded its collection goal in 2003 by P260 million at P424.27 billion and surpassed its year-ago revenues by more than P30 billion.

Last year was the first time in years that the BIR exceeded its target.

Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said that in December, the BIR collected P35.68 billion, or P1.1 billion more than the P34.55-billion goal.

Revenues last month were boosted by the BIR's efforts to collect taxes on royalties from the use of software. Before December, the BIR had been unable to collect taxes from earnings out of royalties from software.

"The data is still incomplete and we expect to increase collection further as more data from the regional offices are properly reflected," the BIR chief said.

The strong collection of the BIR and the Bureau of Customs last year helped the government contain the gap between revenues and expenditures to a preliminary P198.7 billion against a ceiling of P202 billion.

Customs collected P106.06 billion in taxes and tariffs in 2003, allowing it to surpass the P100.056-billion goal by 6 percent and the year-ago level by P9.8 billion or 10.2 percent.

Substantial contributions from the Bureau of Treasury and other agencies collecting various fees enabled the Macapagal administration to surpass the P584-billion revenue goal in 2003.

This year, the BIR is expected to account for P488.6 billion of the total collection followed by Customs with P105.2 billion, which represented increases of 15 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

The Bureau of Treasury is seen to contribute P30.5 billion in 2004 while revenue from other sources such as the road-users tax was estimated at P7.52 billion. Fees and charges collected by other government agencies should hit P23.22 billion this year while the sale of government assets was estimated to generate P1 billion.

Parayno credited the BIR's large taxpayers' service for the increased collection. The unit that presses the collection of taxes from large taxpayers accounts for about 56 percent of total revenues.

"The large taxpayers unit achieved a strong showing for December despite falling excise taxes from the petroleum industry and weak revenues from the cigarette manufacturers," Parayno said.

Trade groups join drive vs smuggling

By Michelle V. Remo

BUSINESS groups have joined hands to help the government curb the country's perennial problem of smuggling.

The Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) and the Businessmen Against Graft and Corruption (Bagcor) have signed a memorandum of agreement that would task both of them to help in the country's anti-smuggling campaign.

Under the agreement, FPI shall be assigned to inform the government about cases of direct and technical smuggling, as well as other violations of the Tariff and Customs Code, for possible prosecution.

On the other hand, Bagcor shall be tasked to assist in the legal prosecution of cases of violations through the provision of private prosecutors who may handle the cases.

Smuggling has been considered one of the major problems of local industries, some of which had claimed to be losing significant amounts of revenue from cheap imported goods that enter the country without the payment of proper duties.

Some local industries that have reportedly been adversely affected by smuggled items entering the country included wood, footwear, electronics, and tire, among others.

"No amount of laws or policies will solve the economic ills of the country if smuggling in all forms in not stopped," FPI said in a statement.

The group added that there were instances of factory closures and thousands of job losses brought by some local industries' inability to compete with cheap, smuggled goods.

"The government may not realize it, but smuggling is as dangerous to the economy as illegal drugs, kidnapping and other heinous crimes. It is really a form of plunder," FPI added.

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MOTORING

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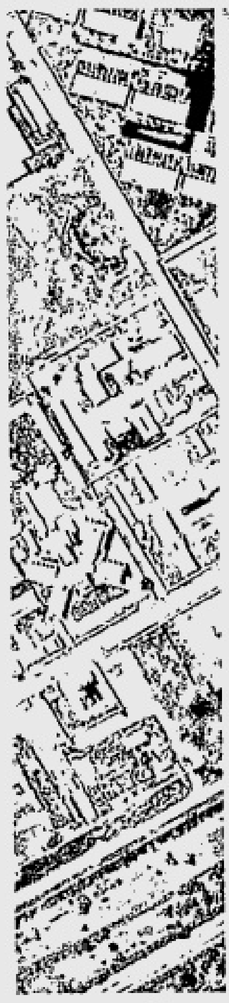
Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

Tracking system assures vehicle owners peace of mind



GOTCHA! vehicle security control system is just like having a bird's eye view of things, that is, being able to look at the target from above.

By Charles E. Buban

WHILE SOME people are interested on where their vehicle is—if it's staying put in the parking lot or going straight to its destination—others are just concerned about the safety of its occupants.

Indeed, with security becoming a big concern nowadays people will do anything to protect their vehicles and those inside it.

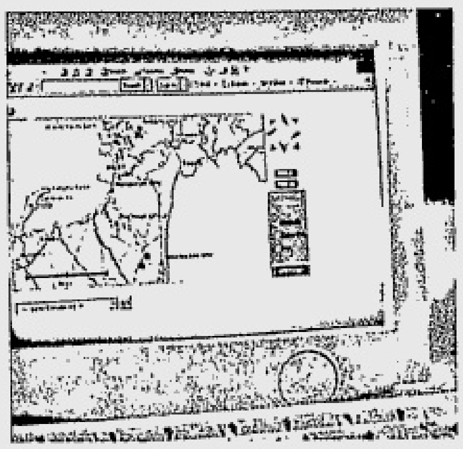
While vehicle armoring and alarm systems have improved in recent years, one of the biggest advancements in vehicle security is in vehicle tracking system.

Here in the Philippines, one company has made a name for itself in making vehicles more secure and easily tracked down.

Established in 1997

Since 1997, Asian Navigation & Tracking Systems Inc. (ANTS) has been supplying vehicle tracking equipment to corporate accounts nationwide, enhancing fleet operations and agencies engaged in security and emergency response.

ANTS' innovative vehicle tracking service makes use of the combined technologies of the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Global Standard for Mobile Communications (GSM).



ANTS tracking technology relies on Gotcha!'s comprehensive map (seen through the web) to guarantee accuracy of location.

The GPS is a worldwide radio-navigation system formed from a constellation of 24 satellites and their ground stations. The system uses these "man-made stars" as reference points to calculate positions accurate to a matter of meters.

The GPS, once exclusive to US military, has matured into a rapidly growing multibillion-dollar industry as it is estimated to reach $22 billion (P1.22 trillion) in 2008, according to a New York-based technology market research firm.

The GSM, on the other hand, is one of the leading digital cellular systems that determines the way in which mobile phones communicate with the land-based network of towers.

Safe and secure service

"(Using these technologies) we guarantee a service that ensure the safety and security of the people and cargo inside your vehicles, while creating higher service efficiency and profitability for your company," says ANTS VP for marketing Gerry Castro.

Recently, ANTS launched Gotcha!, a vehicle security control system that allows accurate location and effective control of vehicles in case of car theft, kidnapping and other emergencies.

Explains ANTS VP for sales Fritz Gaston: "Once an unauthorized person succeeds in entering your car, the Gotcha! system will immediately notify you through text message. You can then use your cell phone to send a text message that will immobilize the vehicle. Current location of vehicle is also available through the cell phone, as well."

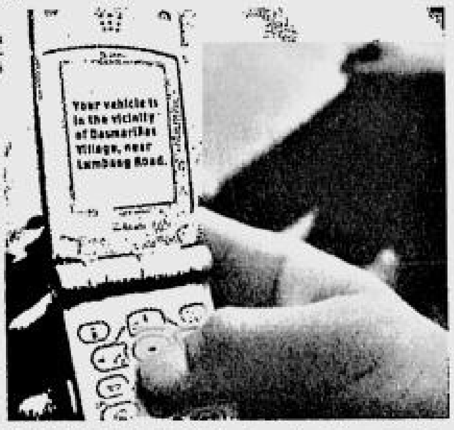
Sending current location

If and when the thief is able to get away with the car, the Gotcha! system will be sending its current location through a text message so its owner can track its movement.

Tracking can also be done through the Web, which gives a visual location of the vehicle through Gotcha!'s comprehensive digital map.

Here are two Gotcha! systems options to choose from:

- Gotcha! ViCel (via the cell phone) operates on GSM technology and allows one to track his or her vehicle within a radius of 50 meters.
- Gotcha! ViSat (via satellite) is more sophisticated as it tracks vehicles via the GPS and has an accuracy of up to 5 meters.


Your vehicle is in the vicinity of Dasmariñas Village, near Lumbang Road.

THROUGH THE CELL phone tracking can be done at intervals or whenever you just want to.

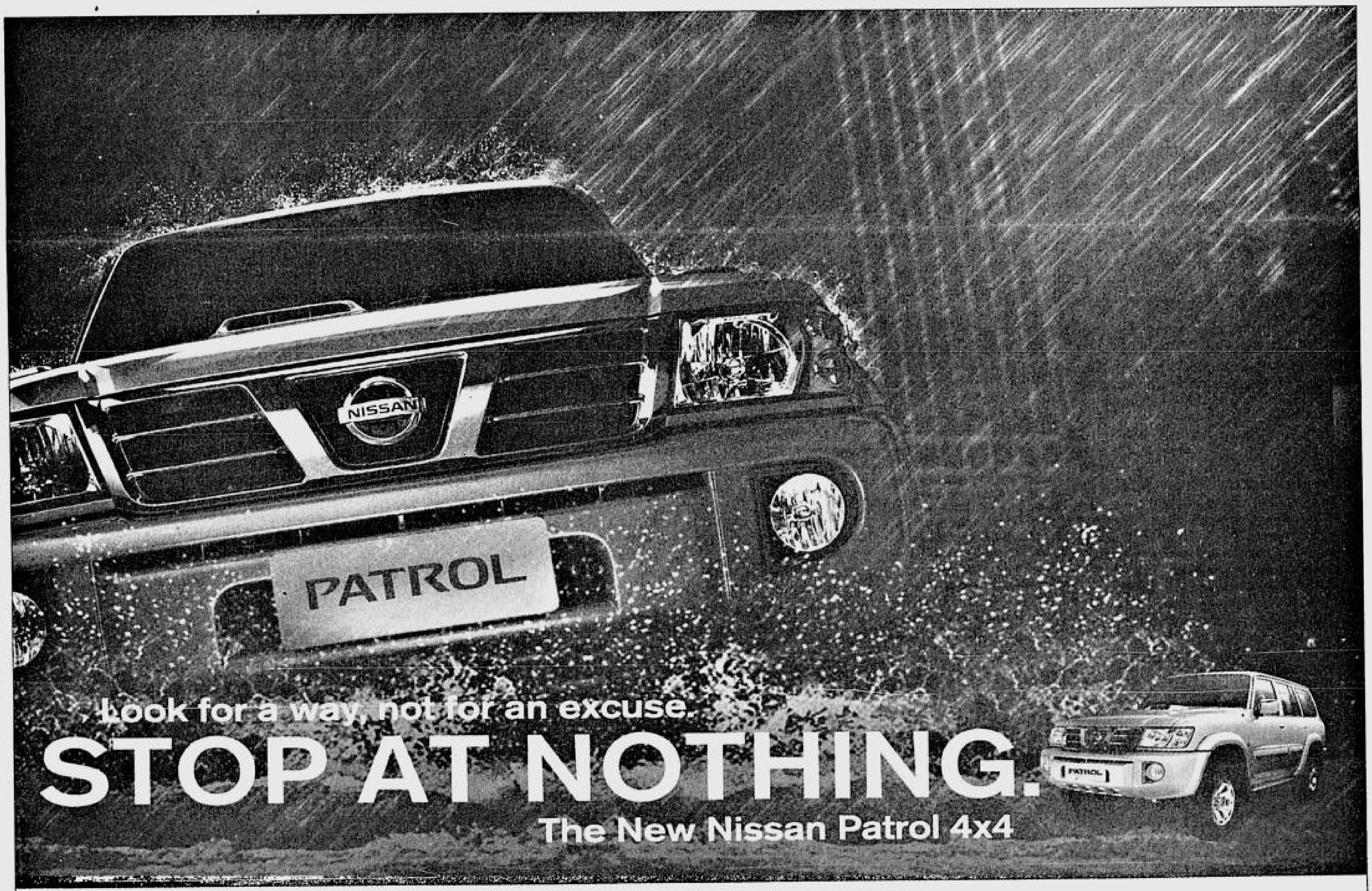
Most affordable

"Although this type of product has been here for quite some time, our company made it more affordable as we have several packages for our varied clientele," says Gaston.

Gotcha! is offered in two options ranging from P9,900 to P14,900 (depending on the package), with a monthly subscription fee of P390 a month for ViCEL and P590 for ViSAT.

Gotcha! is aimed at companies with fleet vehicles as well as individual private vehicle owners who want peace of mind every time they leave their cars unguarded.

According to Castro, a number of companies like banks, security agencies, trucking, shipping, goods distributorship and pharmaceutical companies have already utilized the system for effective route monitoring, resource efficiency, and of course, security of both their personnel and company property.



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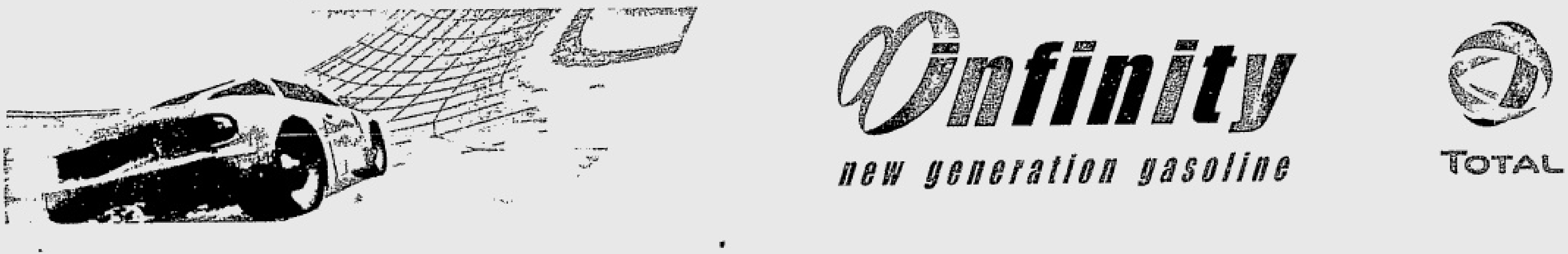


Lord of the F3 ring actually Mr. Su on and off the g

LORDING it over the grid

By Tessa R. Salazar

IN THE MOTOR racing world, it isn't all about the brute force of machines. True, racing engines are some of the meanest human creations that exist. Imagine accelerating from 0 to 100 kph in just three seconds, going on to 270 kph before the first turn. And then these engines must be able to maintain such extreme forces for hours in a single race, and they must stand up to an entire racing season.

But the more remarkable machine is the person driving the machine. A motor race is as demanding on a racer's body as it is on the engine. A racer's body is subjected to so much G-force, and the level of alertness is constantly high. The slightest miscalculation or neglect at 300 kph can be fatal.

Thus, with respect to such physical demands, Formula 3 drivers are, in all respects, as tough and talented as their Formula 1 counterparts. The only difference, of course, lies in the glamour of the race. In fact, many F1 drivers were graduates of the F3 circuit.

So, how fit is the reigning "Lord of the F3 Ring" Pepon Marave nowadays? The 5'-10", 38-year-old racer weighs 145 pounds with a 29-inch waistline, what say you, Mr. Suave?

Pepon complements his "aerodynamic" physique with slick moves. Considered one of the smoothest drivers on the grid, he zips by quietly like a roadrunner without the "beep-beep," and if you observe how he works the transmission, you will agree he is one of the smoothest shifters even among the racing group.

This writer saw it herself, as she hitched on Pepon's unassuming, 14-year-old Mercedes-Benz on a Sunday afternoon.

Pepon, up close and personal, in profile while gazing intently at the road, is a looker. Still single, however, at 38, Pepon says that just like other serious racers, serious relationships never lasted. The demanding race schedules leave no room for matters of the heart.

PEPON is flanked by two sexy models.

Pepon is one of the most boring drivers. And that is a compliment. He drives like a family man off to church on a Sunday. He makes his manual transmission Benz drive like an automatic. You wouldn't know he shifted gears already.

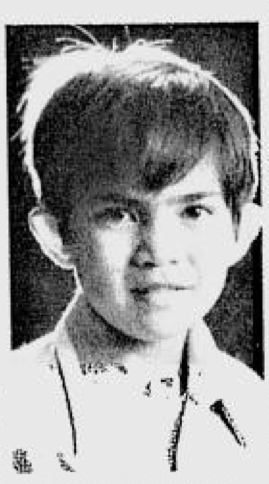
Unlike many racers, Pepon wasn't born with a silver spoon. His parents were average office employees, but saved enough for Pepon's good education in exclusive schools from prep to high school. He studied at the Ateneo de Manila in Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

In college, he went to De La Salle, just three blocks away from the family's house. The money he saved from transportation expenses he used to buy auto equipment. Sometimes, he reminisces, he would join neighborhood *"pusoy"* games. He would use his winnings (a bet of P5 would win him P20, for instance) to buy more auto spare parts.

Pepon is the eldest among his two siblings, a brother and a sister. His streetsmart ways taught him the value of perseverance, a trait that would help etch his name indelibly in the racing world.

He was a 20-year-old engineering sophomore when he became a seatmate of Mike Potenciano. It was Mike who invited him to try the sport of go-karting. Pepon then was into football and was a member of the varsity table tennis team. Nobody would have noticed it then, but Pepon's excellent hand-eye-foot coordination would be ideal for motor sports.

The desire provided the spark to start Pepon's fire for racing. After trying the go-kart, Pepon was hooked. He couldn't stop thinking about it, and his perseverance paid off when Mike sold him his old go kart for P2,500 in 1985. At the time, a decent, race-quality go-kart fetched P30,000.



AS A SCHOOLBOY

A pair of jeans

But the sport of racing was almost beyond Pepon's financial reach. So he had to resort to "extreme measures" just to meet the demands of the sport. Pepon wore just one pair of jeans, the money he saved from clothing expenses he used for the races.

For practice, he used to sneak his mother's Opel Ascona out of the house and use it in slaloms and even actual races. So his mother would not notice, Pepon would pour oil on the gates so these would not produce creaking noises. He would put the Ascona in neutral and push the car out of the garage, starting the engine only at a considerable distance away from the house. A few months later, the deed would be discovered. How? She would see her beloved Ascona on TV competing in races and slaloms.

"I can't stop you anymore," Pepon recalls his mother telling him one time. "I might as well give you money for safety equipment."

When he won his first kart race and the story was headlined in a newspaper, his mom's outlook changed. Needless to say, the father was a quiet supporter of his chosen sport all the time sides, it was the mother's cona he was using, naug Pop).

Racing took a backse when he momentarily put a shoe business, and when worked in Toyota Philipp as an engineer. His six-da week, 12-hours-a-day w schedule ate up all his tim tigued from work and th ness, he decided to race a retained his shoe business.

He does not discard his background, however. Be neer, he says, is a big advan simply because motorsport and machine, and racing, come a very technical sport.

Pepon became five times four times driver of the yea mula 3 and lorded over 20 18-year-career. He is curren on.

Achtung, Schumi!

With a smile, Pepon says born in Germany or Italy a same opportunity as the F1 defeat Michael Schumacher

"Modesty aside, I can cha er in a go-kart race anyti could beat him."

He stresses that he coul macher in a go-kart becaus the experience in F1.

He says he's not alone in a sport where brimming s necessity, Pepon observes t alone, there are around 10 ter than Schumacher.

"But since F1 racing is b

The best of 2003

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

THE BEST cars in 2003 were, I must admit, among those that I had the chance to drive. For how else could I know if a car was good or not if I had not driven it?

The Altis 1.8, of course, is No. 1 in my list. It remains as unbeatable as GMA's unbeatable foe in May—who is none other than Unbeatable Poe?

Resting mostly at the garage since Rufo Sabater, my motoring legman, first drove it in 2002, the Altis 1.8 is an exquisite piece of beauty from Toyota's proud line of world-class automobiles, a machine that can stand up to the challenge of even those that are two notches higher than its category. Happy are those who own one, for they have a car that resembles what a future car is—comfortably fast, elegantly styled, so fuel efficient you won't dare trade it for a luxury car even if you were offered a pressed-down, giveaway price.

My only worry is, the last time Rufo Sabater drove it, the pride of Don Enrique Hts. had a mileage of 788 km already.

Said Rufo Sabater: "It's magic, indeed. I have yet to see a two-year-old car with that kind of mileage."

I know it's not magic. It's just magical, like the fabled Magical Mystery Tour wherein a ride wasn't needed at all for a trip to become mystifyingly successful.

Here's a kiss to Altis, which isn't just a kiss if only to prove that a love affair with a car can also be lasting, if not forever.

* * *

The other cars of note in 2003 are the Nissan Exalta, new Honda City, Vios, Camry and, of course, the timeless Volvo—not necessarily in that order. The Lancer of Sol F. Juvida, my best friend, has been a most reliable babe since it never failed me during the thousand and one times that I needed it on emergency trips.

The AUV to beat in 2003 was, of course, the Revo, with the twin Isuzu wonders Xtreme and Crosswind as tough opponents in this field. The SUVs that gave me ohs and ahs were, of course, the Isuzu Trooper, Toyota Rav 4 and Honda CR-V. The van that gave me the most thrill was none other than the best-selling Starex.

I know the quality of the vehicles I have mentioned will not wane; may they score more "*pogi*" points in this regard in this year of the monkey.

I wish I could have driven more. But I am not fretting. Less is never less. More does not necessarily mean you can discern quality better. Quality is always relative. Maybe, I am not quality myself and so, I need not yearn for more. What comes naturally is better than craving for something that will not come in the end.

* * *

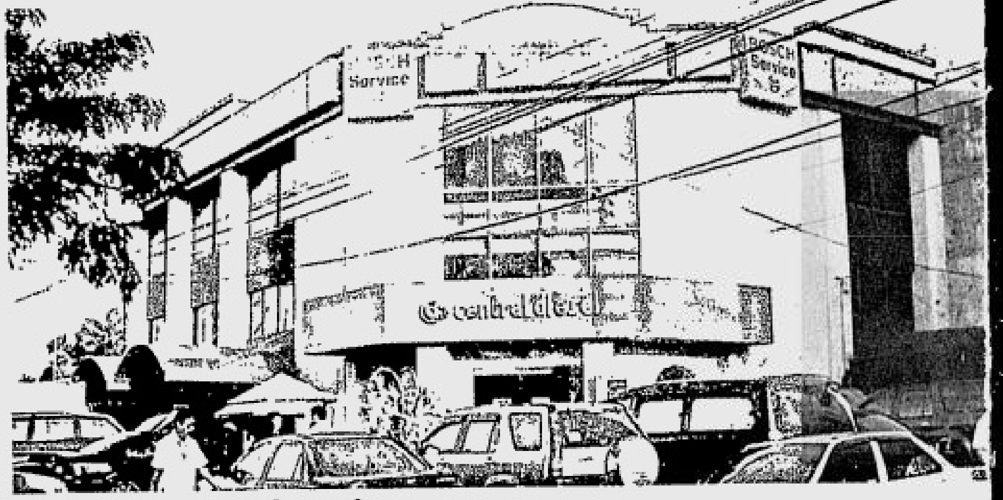
BIG WISH. I wish the Henry Ford Awards will consider this suggestion: This year, it does not require motoring journalists to submit entries. Instead, it compiles materials it deems worthy of consideration for an award. That way, the award becomes really prestigious; it also gives considerable, if not genuine, joy to the winner, because his/her effort has been duly recognized. That is why the 93-year-old Rotary Club of Manila Journalism Awards remains the country's No. 1 journalism award because it practices what I have just suggested.

* * *

PARTY TIME. Toyota will hold its annual Thanksgiving Party tomorrow at the Westin Philippine Plaza. Of all the major car companies in the country, only Toyota holds its Media Christmas Party after the so-called season of merry making. I wanted to know if the official attire for tomorrow is Japanese casual and Toyota VP Danny Isla said, "Not really. Come comfortable." I am not really comfortable wearing the Japanese casual, which is, in layman's language, coat and tie. But if the occasion warrants it, why you'll not see me whining. I love business suits, but I wear them on special events only. I had them on only twice last year. First, during the Toyota dinner reception of the Tokyo Motor Show last October, when some 400 motoring journalists from around the world, including several from Africa, rubbed elbows with the big moguls of Toyota Motor Corp. The second time was when I appeared on TV as analyst of the celebrated Pacquiao-Barrera fight over Solar Sports/RPN 9 last Nov. 16; that was a momentous event if only because our Pacquiao stunned the world by knocking out the heavily favored Barrera (a 4 to 1 bet to win) in the 11th round. I could be wearing coat and tie again when Pacquiao fights in April, that is if Solar Sports' Arnold Arandilla invites me to do color anew for that bout that is much ballyhooed this early as a blockbuster. And so Danny I., I'll come very comfortable-looking tomorrow night. Except for my Fab Four pair of boots, which should draw some attention from non-Beatlemaniacs, I'll wear a T-shirt, topped by a sports jacket. Tell Ariel DJ, Raymond Rodriguez and Brian "Epstein" I'll be on the dot. Deal?

* * *

QUOTE ME. Stop checking your radiator. Constantly opening your radiator cap will only cause harm and, before you know it, lead to overheating.



BOSCH Diesel Center on Quezon Avenue

First Bosch Diesel Center in RP open

THE FIRST Bosch Diesel Center in the Philippines was inaugurated recently. This brings to the country state-of-the-art equipment for diagnosis and repair that has long been a Bosch standard worldwide.

Located on Quezon Avenue (near Capitol Medical Center), the service center is only the second of its kind in Asean and is part of an elite circle of Bosch Diesel Centers around the world. It is operated by Central Diesel Calibration Center, a long-time service agent and dealer of Bosch automotive products in the Philippines.

"We are happy to be able to provide this kind of service in the Philippines, where motorists' needs have grown more sophisticated along with the increasing development of automotive technology," said Christian Lukas, managing director of Bosch Phils.

Stringent selection process

"Bosch practices a stringent selection process when it comes to choosing our business partners, and we are indeed thankful to have such a qualified and dedicated company in Central Diesel that has been a top member of the Bosch service network for some time to provide our services," he added.

The Bosch Diesel Center provides comprehensive problem diagnosis and repair solutions for every kind of diesel engine. It has a testing laboratory fitte the latest Bosch testing and measuring equip and is manned by diesel mechanics who are co ly trained and supported by Bosch's training cen

The concept for the Bosch Diesel Center w veloped in 1995 by the Bosch Aftermarket S department as a new provider of services diesel injection systems for both products an cles. Only the best of the company's existing service agents evolve into a Bosch Diesel Cent-

Diesel engines

Bosch's fascination with diesel started w production of the first series-produced diesel tion pumps way back in 1927. Bosch develop jection equipment that would provide a rapi ply of fuel to enable a diesel engine to develo rotation speeds. This allowed the constructi diesel engines that were smaller yet strong e to power motor vehicles.

With the development of the prechamber bustion process invented in the early 1900s, s diesel engines could be built and the poten- diesel technology could finally be realized. Th ried Bosch way ahead of the competition for injection units that could be manufactured series-production conditions.

Engineer wins in BMW promo

GE is with Prestige Cars BMW (Makati) president Jose R. Alvarez Jr.

ENGINEER Allan Ge won a free Limited Editio F-1 watch when he bought a certified prec BMW 316i from Prestige Cars BMW Makati.

With only 2,000 units made worldwide, Ge first owner of this limited edition watch Philippines.

The Oris F-1 watches are individually nun and enggraved with the BMW-Williams F1 tean Water resistant up to a depth of 300 meters, the features a tachometer top ring, curved sapphire with inside antireflex coating, screwed-down ti crown and titanium back with mineral glass.

The dials are made of carbon fiber, with i featuring a luminous tritium inlay. Packed stylish box, the watch comes with a beatifu scale of a BMW Williams F1 team racing s wheel and a 1:1 origianl mechanical par Williams F1 racing car.

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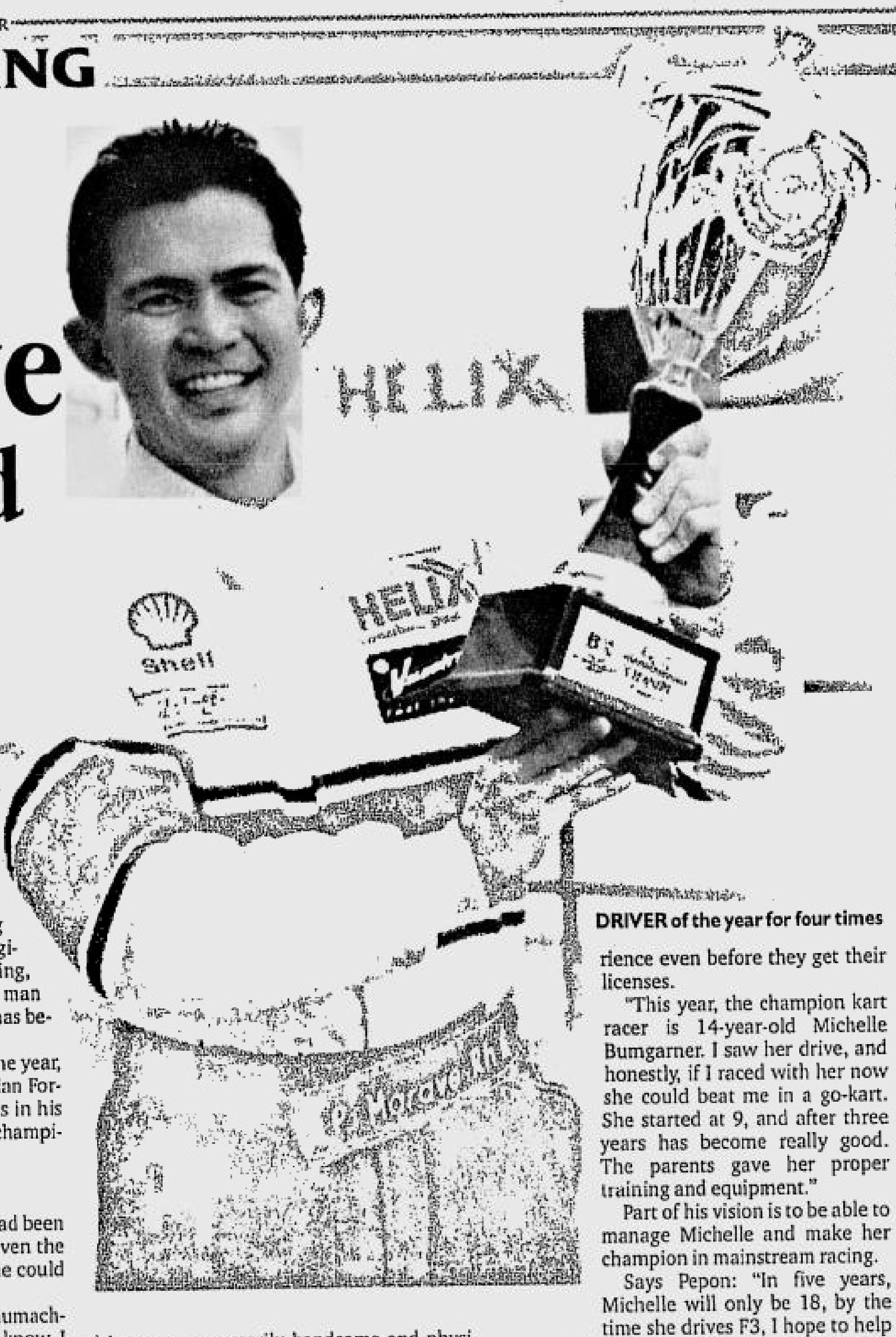
DRIVER of the year for four times

drivers are necessarily handsome and physically appealing to be able to model the 'fastest billboards in the world,' talent is not enough in motor sport," he says.

10 years before license

Pepon assesses that age and numbers could do the trick for Filipinos to break into F1. "Get kids from 8 to 12 years old and engage them in cadet karts. Imagine starting them when they are 8. They'll get 10 years of racing experience even before they get their licenses.

"This year, the champion kart racer is 14-year-old Michelle Bumgarner. I saw her drive, and honestly, if I raced with her now she could beat me in a go-kart. She started at 9, and after three years has become really good. The parents gave her proper training and equipment."

Part of his vision is to be able to manage Michelle and make her champion in mainstream racing.

Says Pepon: "In five years, Michelle will only be 18, by the time she drives F3, I hope to help manage her. By the time, my organization would have been well-funded. I can even send her to F1."

Racing, he believes, can also inculcate in kids responsible motoring.

What's Pepon really like as a person? In reply, Pepon says that to know a person's real personality, make him or her drive a car. We saw how Pepon drove, and found a Mr. Suave on and off the grid. Oh-Ohh, *grabe*!

A truck for all seasons

ISUZU D-Max

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

A 4x4 PICKUP truck is theoretically out of place in the city during the holiday season, when there are no typhoons or floods and thus no potholed roads to test its all-terrain, all-weather mettle. But surprisingly, I found the new Isuzu D-Max extremely useful when it was loaned to me for the two-week Christmas and New Year's holiday break.

First of all, because of its heft—the D-Max is taller, has a bigger wheelbase, bigger tires and a higher ground clearance than market leader Nissan Frontier—it was easier for me to drive through the chaotic traffic created by tens of thousands of people out on the streets, rushing to do their Christmas shopping in Metro Manila. Other vehicles sort of give way when you are driving a brawny pickup like the D-Max.

Secondly, because the D-Max runs on diesel fuel, which costs P4 or P5 less per liter than gasoline, I was able to economize despite all that driving around to shopping malls and holiday parties. The D-Max entrusted to me had a manual transmission, which made it thriftier to drive than if I had been given an automatic transmission unit.

Immense power

Thirdly, because the D-Max is powered by a 3.0 liter direct injection intercooled turbocharged diesel engine packing max 130 horsepower at 3,800 rpm and 28.5 kg/m max torque at 2,000 rpm, it satisfied my yen for speed, easily cruising at 140 km per hour on the expressway. Although pickup trucks are not designed to be fast, it is reassuring to know that the immense power and high torque are there if needed.

Fourth, because the D-Max is equipped with the most complete active and passive safety features among all the pickups in the market, I felt cocooned driving it. The D-Max not only has dual SRS air bags up front, it also has ABS with electronic brake force distribution and G-sensor, limited siip differential, a collapsible steering column, high-mounted third brake light, a headlamp aimer and air defoggers for the windshield, side windows and rear glass aside from the usual rigid body with crumple zones, reinforced door beams, 3-point ELR seatbelts, child safety locks, fog lamps, keyless entry and anti-theft alarm system.

Conveniences

Although the 4x4 D-Max does not have leather seats and woodgrain paneling like the Nissan Frontier, it has other creature comforts and conveniences such as a 4-spoke, leather-wrapped tilt steering wheel, a 6-speaker Clarion slide face, single in-dash CD/tuner with function and radio band control buttons on the steering wheel, map lamp with card holder, retractable assist grips with coat hangers, four cupholders (two beneath the dashboard, two integrated in the pockets of the front doors), power door locks and window controls on both the driver and front passenger sides plus storage spaces galore.

As for the exterior, I liked the D-Max's snub-nosed bumper design which, together with its rack and pinion steering system, makes it easy to maneuver. I also liked the prominently delineated fender flares, the large chrome-accented door handles and side mirrors that complement the chrome radiator grille and six-stud, six-spoke linear alloy wheels to add a touch of elegance to the D-Max's sporty, muscular profile.

Unleashed

I know, I know. Some men out there must be lamenting what a waste to let a female test-drive a 4x4 pickup for two weeks in the city when it could have been unleashed in the Pinatubo boondocks during that time or on other mountainous, slippery, rocky terrain to test its off-road capability. Of course, I was unable to check out the D-Max's chassis strength and pulling power by overloading its cargo bed with heavy things or verify whether its one-touch shift-on-the-fly transfer case enables it to climb steep slopes with ease.

Neither did I test the D-Max's gradeability which, Isuzu Philippines Corp. claims, allows it to be safely driven laterally on slopes of up to 49 degrees. I did not drive over rocks or boulders to note the advantages of the D-Max's high approach and departure angles when passing over road obstacles, nor did I cross a river or frequent rough, unpaved roads to see whether the D-Max's high (225 mm) ground clearance and heavy-duty skid plate really protect the underside from damage. In short, I did not do any off-roading although I had a pickup respected worldwide for its durability and performance in all terrain and weather conditions.

But hey, surveys made by the automobile industry show that over 80 percent of 4WD SUV and pickup truck owners never go off-roading. My point is that the D-Max is eminently suitable for city driving as it is for serious off-roading—if you don't mind the bouncy ride provided by the leaf-spring rear suspension (after a while, you get used to it). In other words, the D-Max is a truck for all seasons.

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: A day without sunshine is like, you know, night.

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Suzuki's global alliance brings in 2 new bikes

By Charles E. Buban

A LITTLE more than two years ago, Suzuki Motor and Kawasaki Heavy Industries of Japan have sealed a deal to form an alliance in the motorcycle business.

Joint product development, shared components and procurements, and reciprocal original equipment manufacturers deals (manufacturing products under the OEM partner brand) are included in this global alliance.

Although it's still too early to tell how the partnership of these two Japanese motorcycle makers will reflect in the eyes of the consumers and what impact it may have, their markets abroad are already seeing some visible results.

Pair of bikes introduced

Last month, Suzuki Philippines Inc. introduced a pair of four-stroke business motorcycle models, that is, for the passenger and tricycle market.

Launched during the kickoff of the 2003 Suzuki Tricycle Business Meeting under the "Ang Pares Na Walang Kapares" banner, the Suzuki GS175 and Suzuki GS125 will complement Suzuki's solo rider model, the four-stroke Shogun R 125 and its two-stroke business model, the X-4.

The GS 175 shares its major components with the Kawasaki Barako, launched last year. Likewise, Suzuki's GS 125 will also be launched under a Kawasaki name early this year.

Suzuki Philippines president Kiyoshi Kawahara says the two motorcycles were designed with the installation of a side car in mind, and that their performance will attest to the company's commitment to deliver durable, fuel-efficient and environment-friendly motorcycles.

Known by heart

Says Kawahara: "The tricycle market is a segment that Suzuki has dominated for years and has known by heart. With the GS125 and the GS175, we hope to establish a long-term partnership with our customers."

The alliance is now making possible an exciting wave of technology sharing

GS175

Available in black and red, the GS125 is perhaps the only four-stroke tricycle that can pass off as a solo bike.

Garbed in a sporty, macho frame, the new business bike is a 5-speed workhorse powered by a Euro 1 (emission standard) compliant 125 cc SOHC 4-stroke air-cooled engine.

Twin-meter panel

The GS125 is equipped with features like a twin-meter paneled tachometer to enable the rider to choose appropriate gear positioning; a CAD-design durable frame and an originally shaped square pipe swing arm to ensure road stability even with a heavy load; and a wide diameter 35-watt multireflection lamp that can be set in three modes.

Apart from the high and low beam, it features a first-ever light mode comparable to the parking light of automobiles that ensure rider's visibility on the road, and is ideal for dusk and dawn traveling.

The GS125 also comes with free additional double rear shock absorbers for added heavy-duty suspension and a higher gear ratio sprocket.

Ultimate workhorse

The GS175, on the other hand, is Suzuki's ultimate workhorse with its powerful 175 cc SOHC 4-stroke air-cooled engine.

Available in black, blue and red, it was designed with safety and convenience in mind.

It features not only a vibration damper to improve suspension on the roughest roads and an attached sidecar but also a sturdy front fork to provide higher ground clearance and a firmer, steadier hold on the road.

Even the seat design is made longer to accommodate more passengers and guarantee good business mileage every day.

Quickstart technology

For veteran tricycle drivers, GS175's new Quickstart technology is a welcome and refreshing convenience since it makes both kick and electric start-up mechanisms easier and definite.

With the introduction of these two Suzuki GS series motorcycles, the company has more models to choose from, and which, it now conveys to its dealers nationwide through a series of dealer presentations.

"The alliance is now making possible an exciting wave of technology sharing," assures Kawahara. He says the tie-up can only guarantee to augment each other's product mix and increase both brands' competitiveness in all categories.

GS125

o inclined to back

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No rush to judgment

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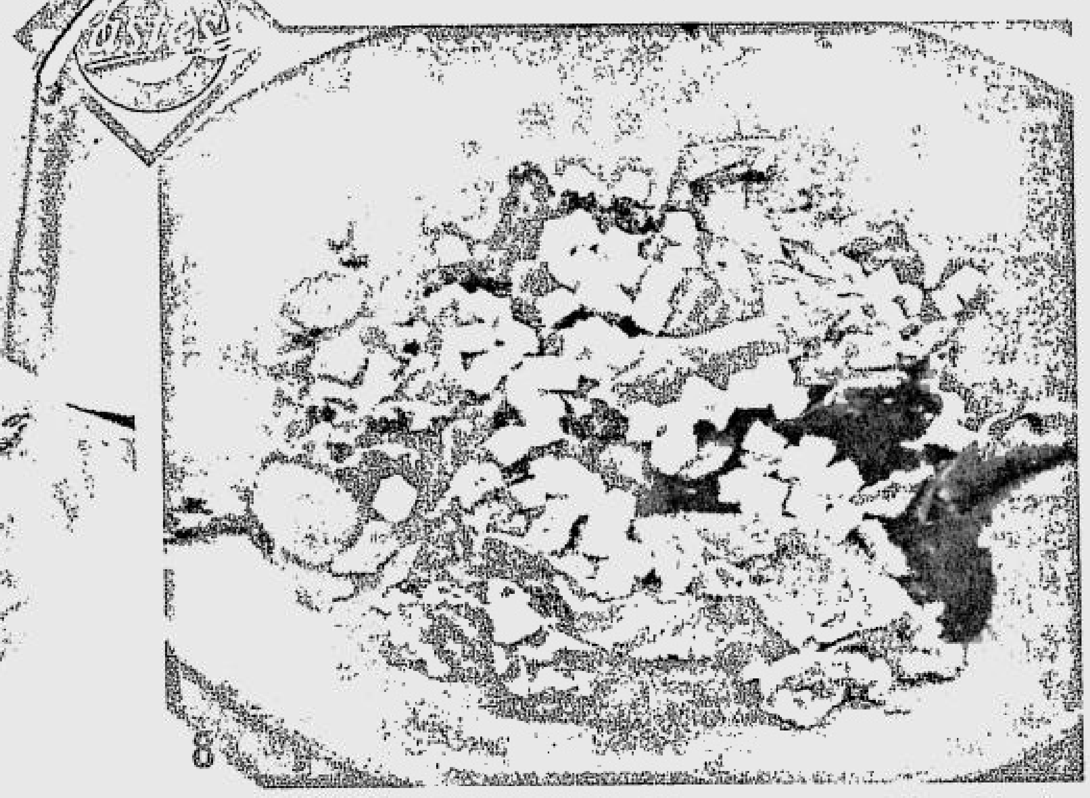
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso

POUR honey balsamic vinaigrette on the vegetable. Add salt and pepper. Then toss the dressing and greens.

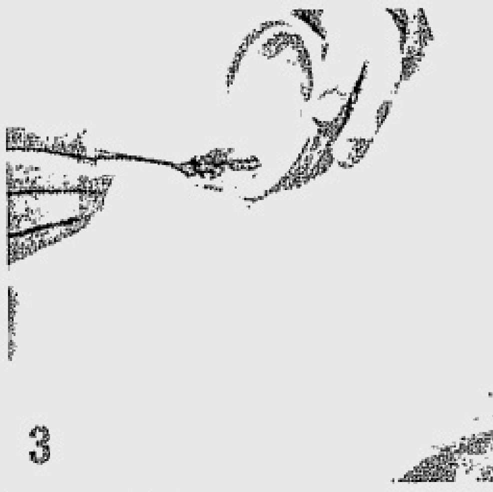
GARNISH with grapes, *kesong puti* and walnuts.



INSALATA Uva with Honey Balsamic Vinaigrette

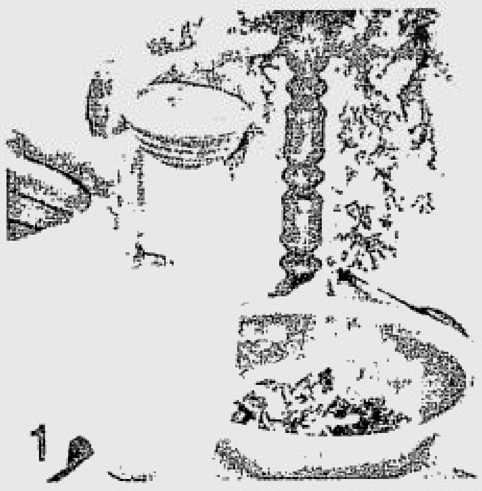
STIR in honey.

BLEND until emulsified.



POUR extra virgin oil.

ADD Dijon mustard.



PUT shallots in the blender.

New salad days

If you've fallen into a green rut, it's time to rethink your routine and start fresh

Text by Rowena C. Burgos
Photos by Roger Carpio

IF your idea of making salad is to tear up some iceberg lettuce, throw in a few slices of carrot and tomato and pop open a bottle of store-bought dressing, it's time to expand your repertoire.

Too often salads end up as the sad bit of floppy lettuce that gets forgotten by the side of a main dish. It's unfortunate, because with just a couple of inspired additions, a wallflower of a salad can suddenly become worthy of the spotlight.

A graduate of hotel and restaurant administration at the University of the Philippines and New England Culinary Institute in Vermont, USA, Fernando Aracama is a great believer in keeping food interesting. According to him, salads don't have to be chock-full of fixings to be interesting.

"In fact, a simple plate of leaves plucked from the garden and served with homemade vinaigrette is a magnificent thing. But when we can also create fabulous salads from something short of fresh-picked vegetables, we know we've transcended the ordinary," says Aracama, who manages Restaurant Uva on Tomas Morato, Quezon City and Greenbelt 3, Makati. "I don't think there's anything more wonderful than poking around a plateful of greens and finding a spiced nut or a bit of crispy-coated cheese or a novel vegetable you weren't expecting."

And don't forget the dressing. Homemade versions can be so much more vibrant than store-bought dressings that they are always worth making, Aracama says.

Whether it's that classic vinaigrette that's nothing more than fine olive oil and vinegar whisked with salt, pepper and a touch of fresh herbs, or a concoction livened up with fruit or tangy cheese, a dressing should be so delicious you're tempted to soak up the leftovers with fresh bread.

"It's all about putting delight and surprise back into a food that's gone ho-hum. If you've fallen into a salad rut, it's time to rethink your routine and start fresh," Aracama says.

"Even if you don't have a dazzling new recipe to try out, you can liven up the color, texture and flavor of even the simplest salad by tossing in a few unusual ingredients."

Aracama creates Insalata Uva with Honey Balsamic Vinaigrette, a flavorful melding of tastes and textures, as well as a heap of nutrients.

STEP BY STEP

Ingredients

2 medium shallots, minced
1 tsp Dijon mustard
4 tbsp balsamic vinegar or *sukang paombong*
1 c oil blend (½ c extra virgin olive oil and ½ c corn oil)
½ tsp honey or *muscovado*
salt and pepper
100 g mixed salad greens
3 tbsp halved grapes
2 tbsp *kesong puti*
1 tbsp chopped walnuts

E-mail the author at rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

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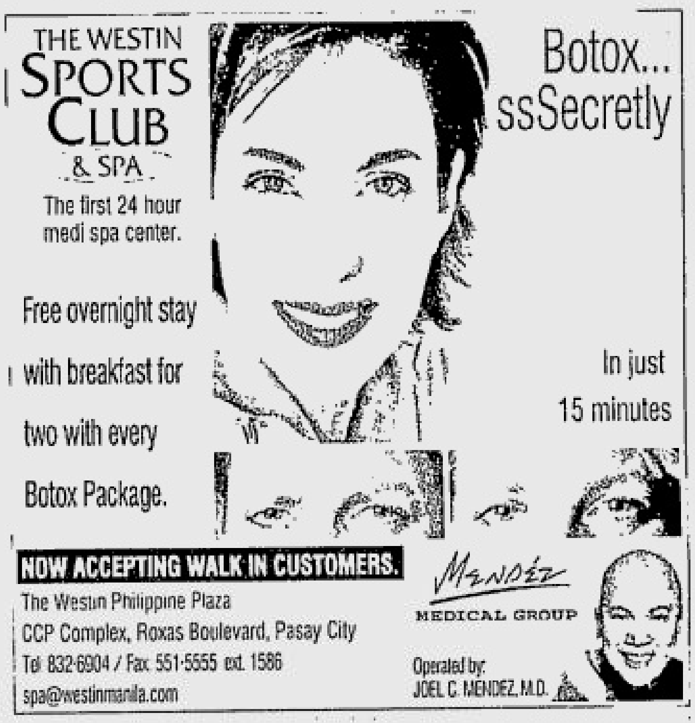

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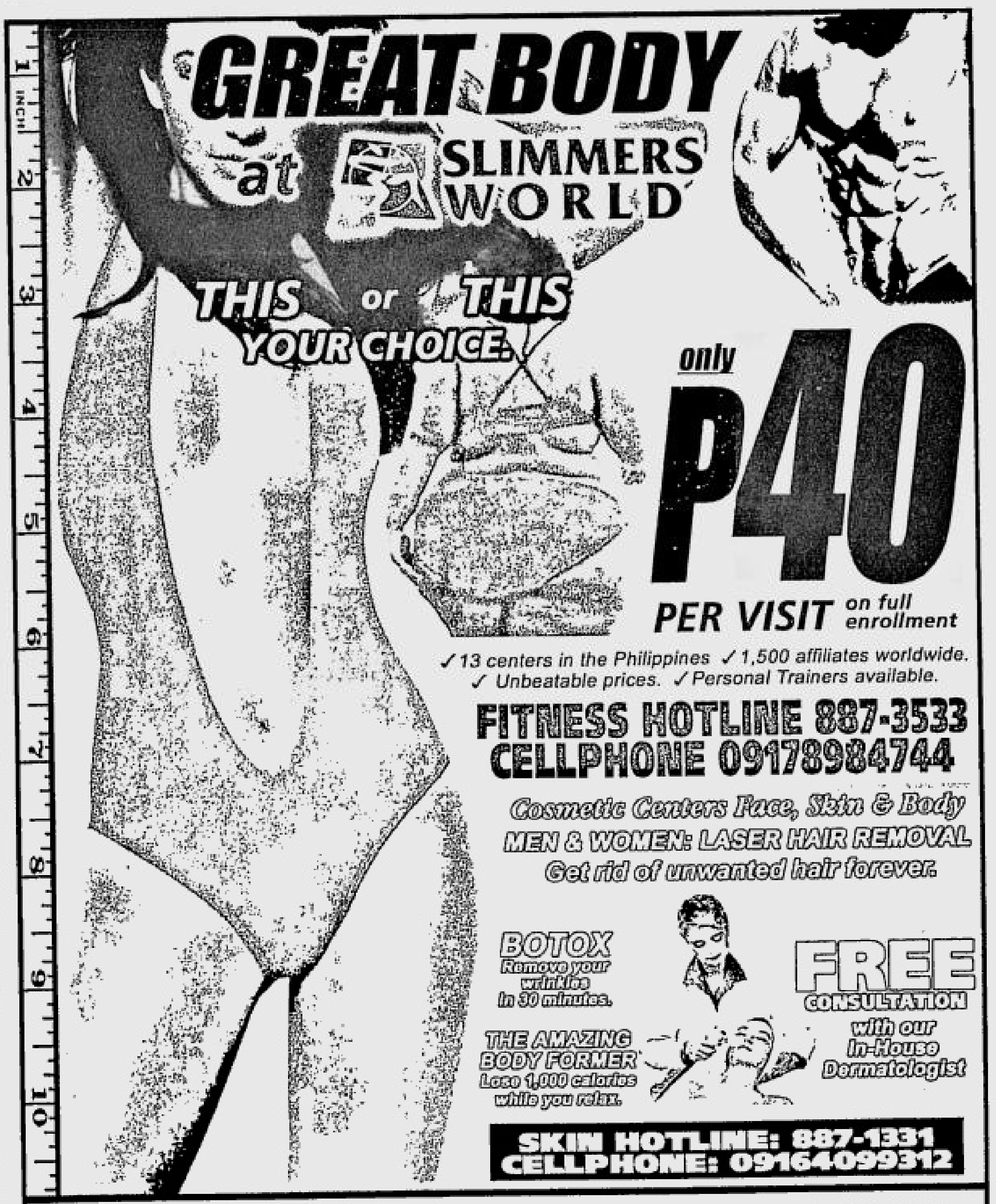

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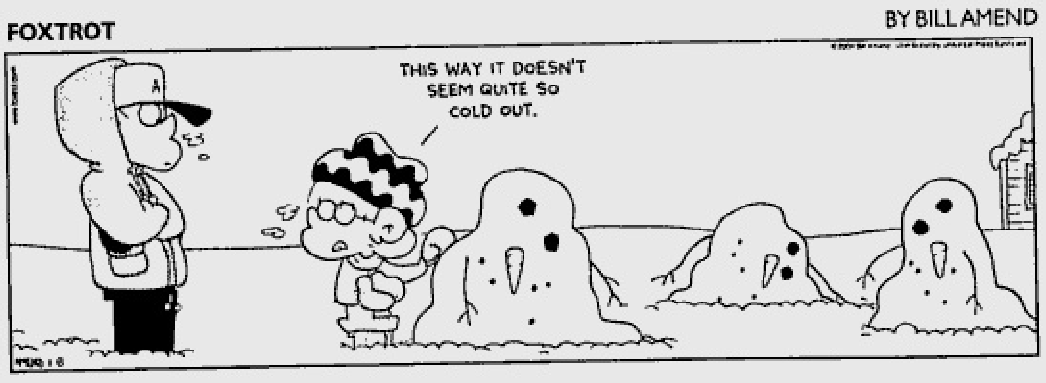
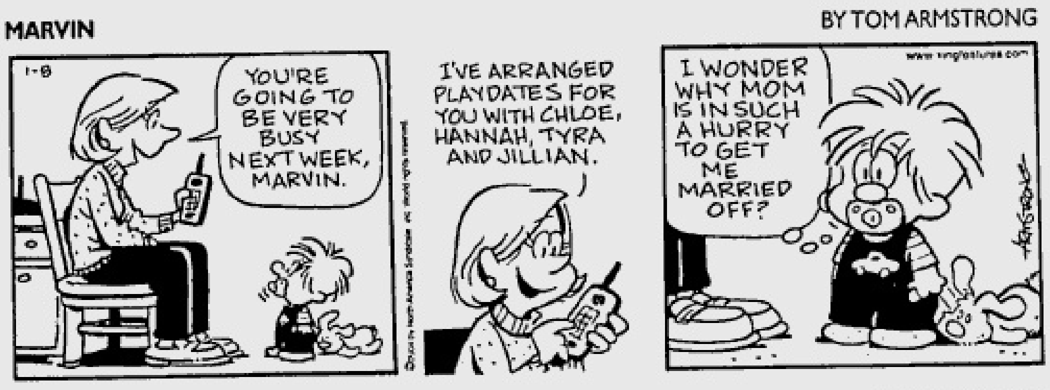
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


THIS WAY IT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE SO COLD OUT.

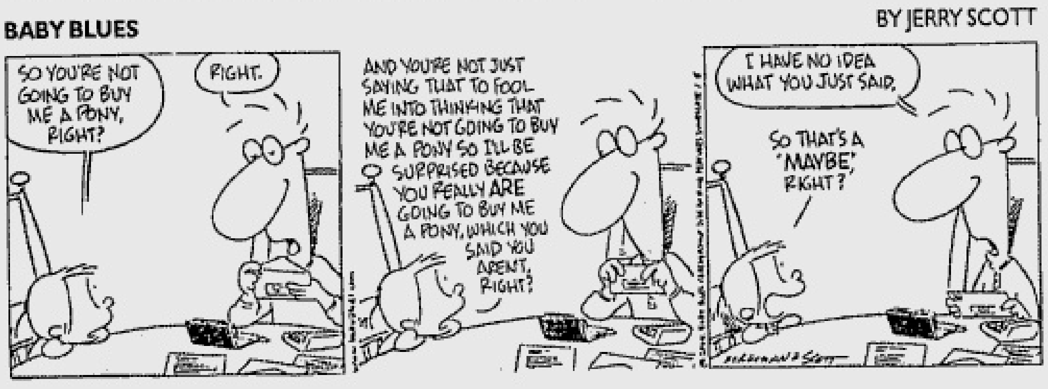
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


1-8
YOU'RE GOING TO BE VERY BUSY NEXT WEEK, MARVIN.
I'VE ARRANGED PLAYDATES FOR YOU WITH CHLOE, HANNAH, TYRA AND JILLIAN.
I WONDER WHY MOM IS IN SUCH A HURRY TO GET ME MARRIED OFF?

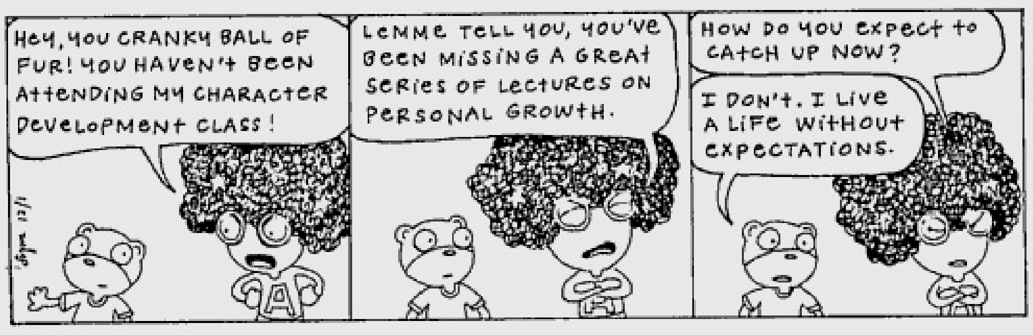
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


SO YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BUY ME A PONY, RIGHT?
RIGHT.
AND YOU'RE NOT JUST SAYING THAT TO FOOL ME INTO THINKING THAT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BUY ME A PONY SO I'LL BE SURPRISED BECAUSE YOU REALLY ARE GOING TO BUY ME A PONY, WHICH YOU SAID YOU AREN'T, RIGHT?
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU JUST SAID.
SO THAT'S A "MAYBE," RIGHT?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, you CRANKY BALL OF FUR! You HAVEN't BEEN ATTENDING MY CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT CLASS!
LEMME TELL YOU, YOU'VE BEEN MISSING A GREAT SERIES OF LECTURES ON PERSONAL GROWTH.
HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO CATCH UP NOW?
I DON'T. I LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT EXPECTATIONS.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: Your self-confidence gives you so much style, you influence those around you. You're intense, and invariably you have your own trademark or distinctive quality that is memorable. You have wonderful powers of concentration. Obstacles do not daunt you. Your closest relationships will blossom this year. Expect more socializing.

Birthdate of: Elvis Presley, entertainer; Stephen Hawking, physicist; David Bowie, musician.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Lately, you feel very deeply about someone. It occurs to you now how important friendship is in your life. (No man is an island—not even a peninsula.)

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Your connection with a parent, boss or authority figure in life seems to deepen now. You see that there is a mutually beneficial relationship taking place.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): New systems of thought, philosophies and religious ideas appeal very strongly to you now. You see how important it is to have something to believe in—deeply.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Someone at work is ready to help you or extend a hand. Conversely, you might be the individual who can rescue someone else. Stay alert for this opportunity.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a good time to enhance your closest relationships. Express your feelings for someone. Do not be afraid to go out on a limb. (After all, that's where the sweetest fruit is.)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Improvements, reforms and new ways of doing things at work delight you now. Not only does this give you pleasure, it might even boost your earnings!

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Love at first sight might grab you now. A relationship that has a peculiarly "fated" quality could occur in your life at this time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Even the most casual conversation can stir emotions within you now. All your exchanges with others are particularly intense at this time.

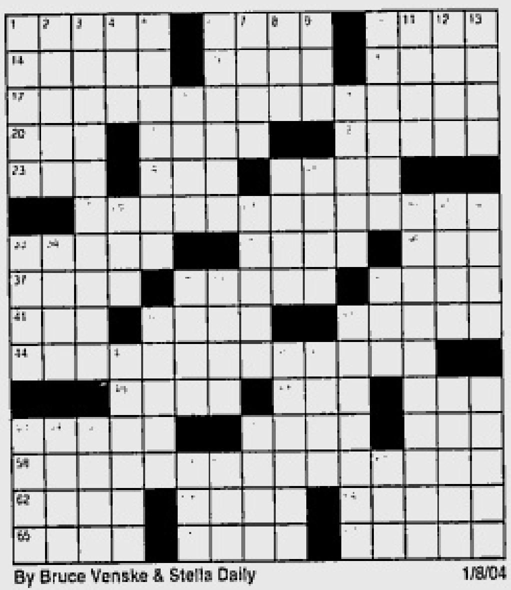
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You feel obsessive—practically compulsive—about wanting to buy something right now. You feel you simply have to have it. (Tread carefully before you spend your money.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your self-image is important to you because you are someone who needs respect from others. That's why you want to buy something that is impressive.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Your sign is always associated with friendship. You know the value of networking. Because at this time in your life friends are particularly important, tell others that you care.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): A slight shift in your overall career path could be an improvement right now. Nothing is written in stone. Be open to changes. This is the time in your life when you're trying to figure out what you want to be when you grow up.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Bruce Venske & Stella Daily
Madison, WI
1/8/04

ACROSS
1 Boston daily
6 Address for a lady
10 Pitiful cry
14 Competitor
15 __-Romeo (Italian car)
16 Man or Dogs
17 Start of a quip
20 __ diem (daily)
21 Cast a ballot
22 Minimum
23 Important period
24 TV Tarzan Ron
25 Rejuvenation centers
27 Part 2 of quip
33 Power units
35 Wealthy
36 Ostrichlike bird
37 Send out
38 Rams
40 Iowa State's home
41 Top personal choice: slang
42 100-yard event
43 Formulate in the mind
44 Part 3 of quip
48 Pub servings
49 William Tell's canton
50 Vim
53 Type of boom
56 Discomfort
57 Hurry!
58 End of quip
62 Yeats' country
63 After-bath powder
64 Long-legged wading bird
65 State of mind
66 Oxen connection
67 Active folk

DOWN
1 Search blindly
2 Vacation vessel
3 Hyper
4 __-relief
5 Football teams
6 Long-suffering one
7 Away from the wind
8 Astern
9 Former Chinese leader
10 Superlatively sage
11 On the waves
12 Troubles
13 Took off
18 Stable youngster
19 Spaceman Gordon
25 Narrow cut
26 Photos
28 Giant Mel
29 Correct: pref.
30 Half of the world
31 Grace closer
32 Elephant feature
33 Horizontal threads
34 Oriental nursemaid
38 Expose
39 Employs
40 Spotter's cry
42 "La __ Vita"
43 Attenuated
45 Posted
46 Subtle shade of meaning
47 New York state canal
51 Duck down
52 Nuisances
53 Goblet part
54 Buckeye State
55 Rex Stout's Wolfe
56 11th U.S. president
59 Swine pen
60 __ Tome and Principe
61 Freudian concept

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

D	A	M	E	■	L	O	R	N	E	■	D	I	S	K
E	R	O	[illegible]	■	O	R	I	O	N	■	U	G	L	I
L	E	S	[illegible]	■	D	E	N	V	E	R	B	O	O	T
[illegible]	A	[illegible]	■	A	G	O	G	■	V	O	I	R	E	S
■	■	D	A	T	E	S	■	W	I	N	C	■	■	■
H	A	W	S	E	R	■	T	H	E	S	U	P	E	R
E	L	M	[illegible]	■	[illegible]	[illegible]	I	F	[illegible]	■	S	E	X	Y
F	L	[illegible]	■	■	■	H	E	R	■	■	■	K	I	D
T	E	L	L	■	D	A	R	E	[illegible]	■	[illegible]	[illegible]	L	E
S	N	E	A	K	E	R	S	■	A	T	O	N	E	R
■	■	■	S	N	A	F	■	B	R	I	N	G	■	■
U	N	S	H	O	D	■	H	A	R	[illegible]	■	[illegible]	E	B
R	O	M	E	B	E	A	U	T	Y	■	H	U	R	L
S	O	U	P	■	[illegible]	I	G	E	[illegible]	■	A	C	N	E
A	N	T	S	■	D	R	E	S	S	■	S	K	E	W

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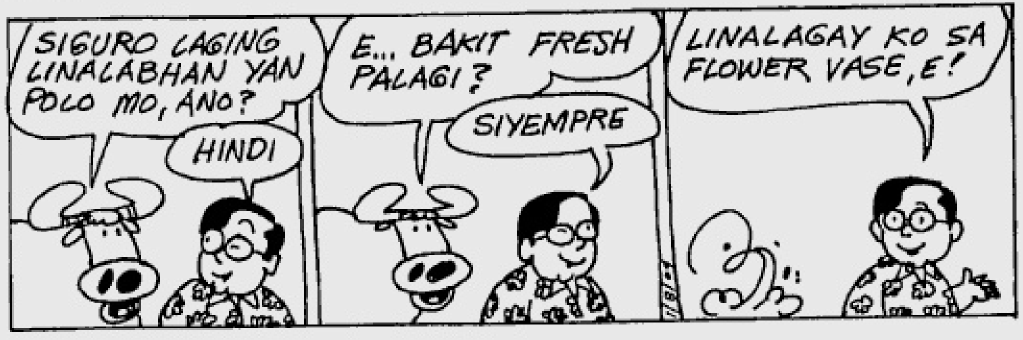
1/8/04

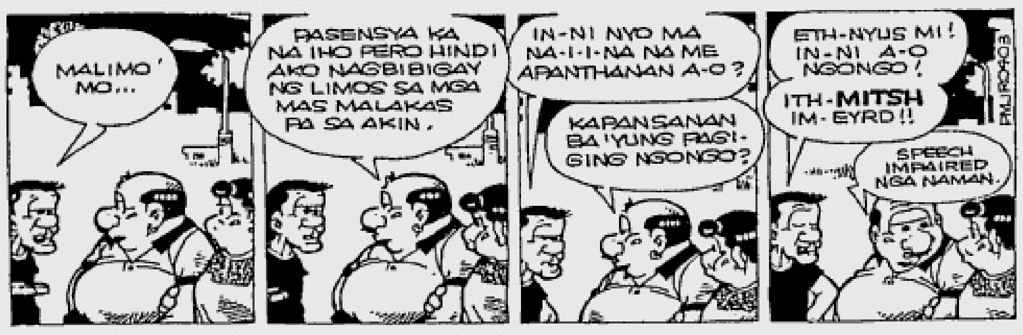
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


SIGURO LAGING LINALABHAN YAN POLO MO, ANO?
HINDI
E... BAKIT FRESH PALAGI?
SIYEMPRE
LINALAGAY KO SA FLOWER VASE, E!

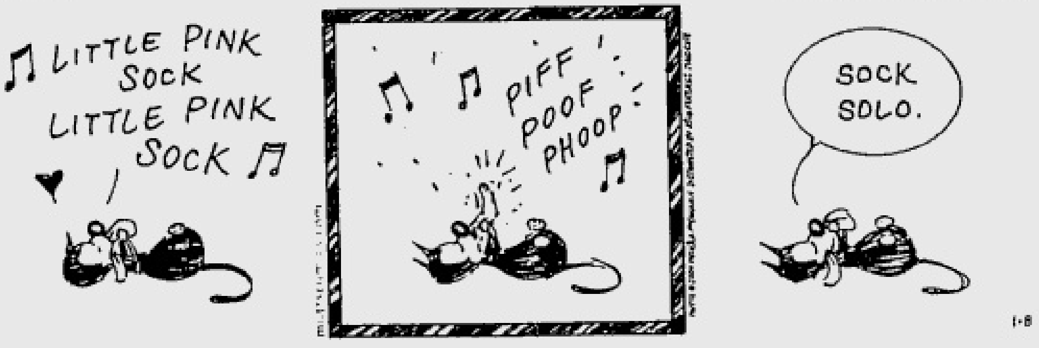
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MALIMO' MO...
PASENSYA KA NA IHO PERO HINDI AKO NAGBIBIGAY NG LIMOS SA MGA MAS MALAKAS PA SA AKIN.
IN-NI NYO MA NA-I-I-NA NA ME APANTHANAN A-O?
KAPANSANAN BA 'YUNG PAGI-GING NGONGO?
ETH-NYUS MI! IN-NI A-O NGONGO! ITH-MITSH IM-EYRD!!
SPEECH IMPAIRED NGA NAMAN.
PMJR0403

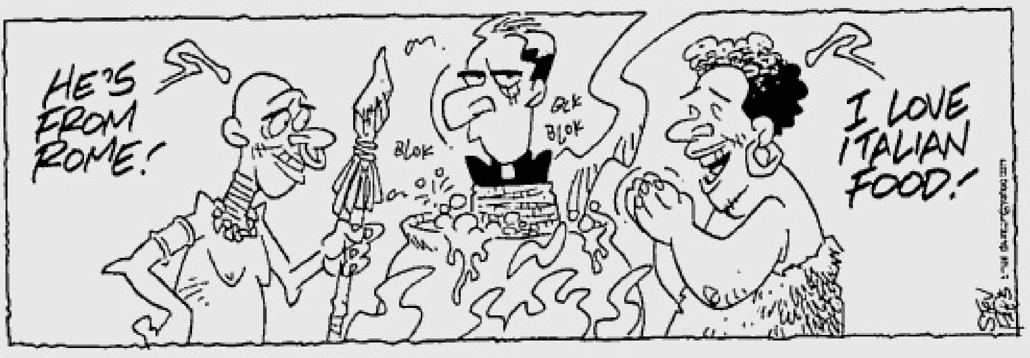
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


♫ LITTLE PINK SOCK LITTLE PINK SOCK ♫
♫ ♫ PIFF POOF PHOOP ♫
SOCK SOLO.
1-8

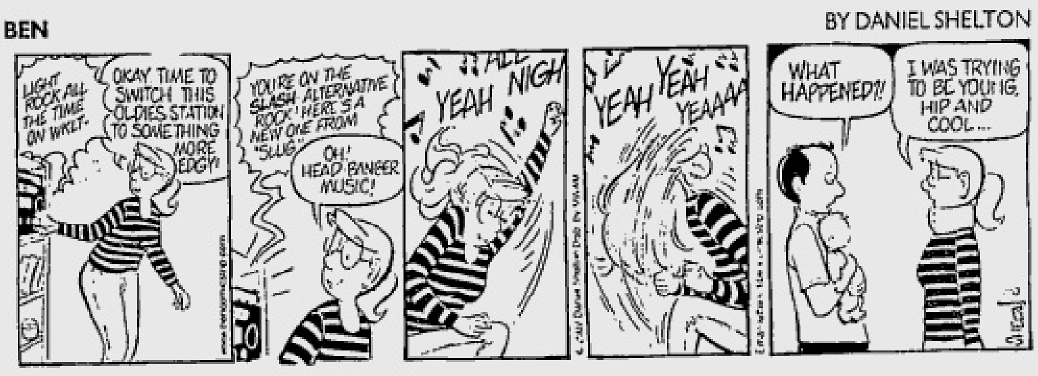
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


HE'S FROM ROME!
BLOK
GLK BLOK
I LOVE ITALIAN FOOD!

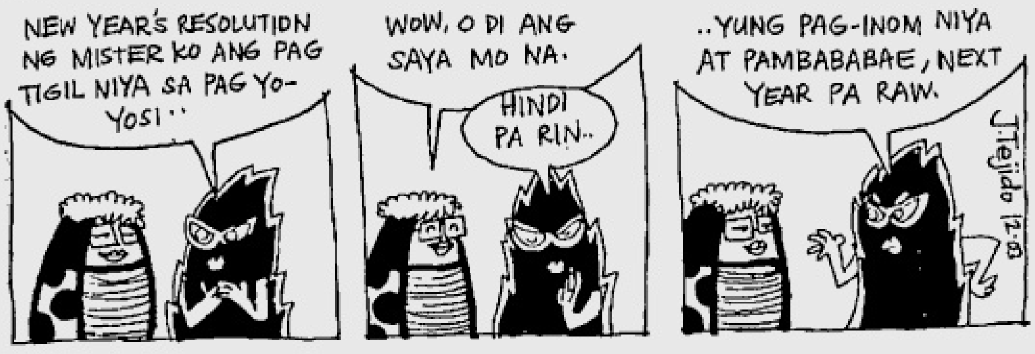
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


LIGHT ROCK ALL THE TIME ON WKLT-
OKAY. TIME TO SWITCH THIS OLDIES STATION TO SOMETHING MORE EDGY!
YOU'RE ON THE SLASH ALTERNATIVE ROCK! HERE'S A NEW ONE FROM "SLUG"
OH! HEAD BANGER MUSIC!
YEAH ALL NIGH
YEAH YEAH YEAAAA
WHAT HAPPENED?!
I WAS TRYING TO BE YOUNG, HIP AND COOL...

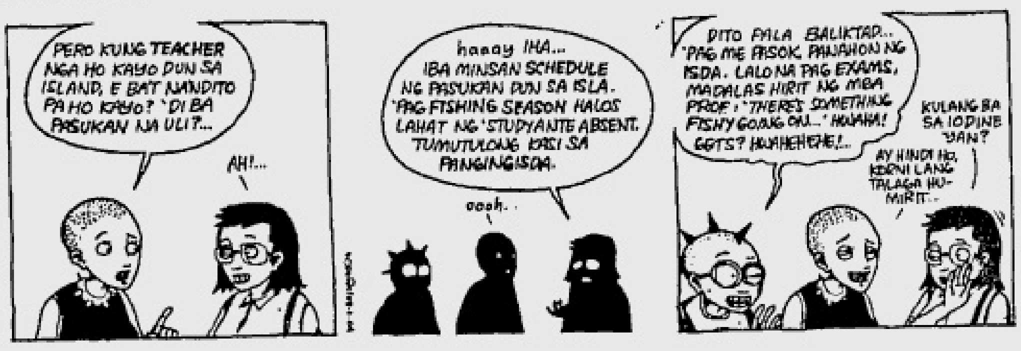
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION NG MISTER KO ANG PAG TIGIL NIYA SA PAG YO-YOSI..
WOW, O DI ANG SAYA MO NA.
HINDI PA RIN..
..YUNG PAG-INOM NIYA AT PAMBABABAE, NEXT YEAR PA RAW.
J.Tejido 12-03

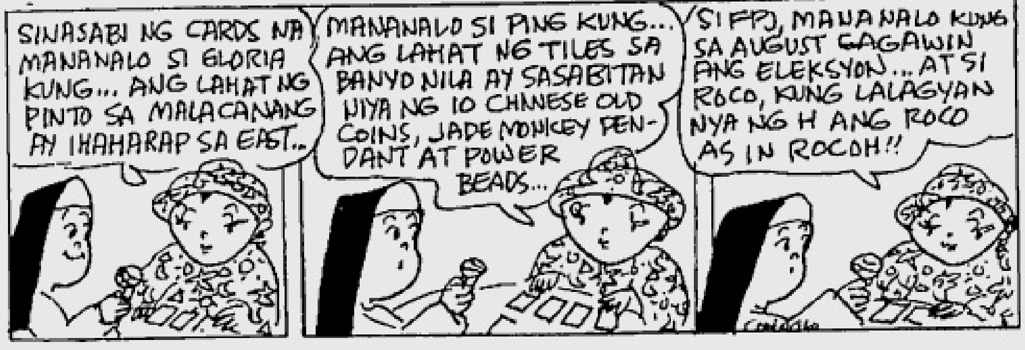
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


PERO KUNG TEACHER NGA HO KAYO DUN SA ISLAND, E BAT NANDITO PA HO KAYO? 'DI BA PASUKAN NA ULIT...
AH!...
haaay IHA... IBA MINSAN SCHEDULE NG PASUKAN DUN SA ISLA. 'PAG FISHING SEASON HALOS LAHAT NG 'STUDYANTE ABSENT. TUMUTULONG KASI SA PANGINGISDA.
oooh.
DITO PALA BALIKTAD... 'PAG ME PASOK, PANAHON NG ISDA. LALO NA PAG EXAMS, MADALAS HIRIT NG MGA PROF: "THERE'S SOMETHING FISHY GOING ON..." HUAHA! GETS? HUAHEHEHE!...
KULANG BA SA IODINE 'YAN?
AY HINDI HO, KORNI LANG TALAGA HU-MIRIT..

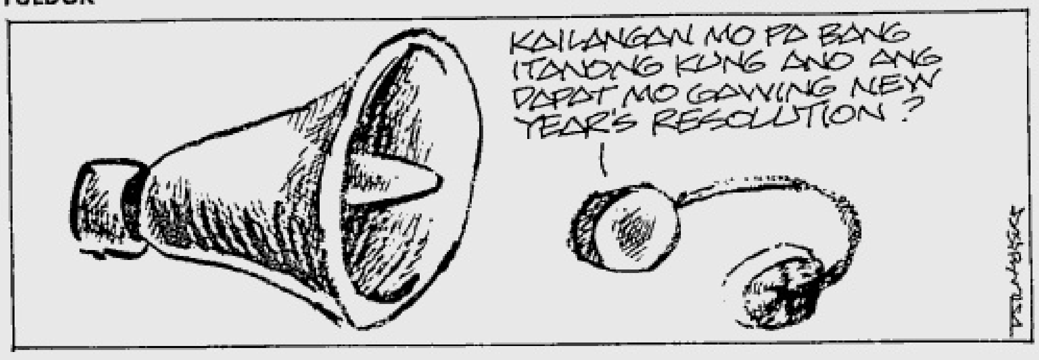
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SINASABI NG CARDS NA MANANALO SI GLORIA KUNG... ANG LAHAT NG PINTO SA MALACANANG AY IHAHARAP SA EAST..
MANANALO SI PING KUNG... ANG LAHAT NG TILES SA BANYO NILA AY SASABITAN NIYA NG 10 CHINESE OLD COINS, JADE MONKEY PENDANT AT POWER BEADS...
SI FPJ, MANANALO KUNG SA AUGUST GAGAWIN ANG ELEKSYON... AT SI ROCO, KUNG LALAGYAN NYA NG H ANG ROCO AS IN ROCOH!!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


KAILANGAN MO PA BANG ITANONG KUNG ANO ANG DAPAT MO GAWING NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?

PASHA'S lamb, one of the authentic Mediterranean dishes available in the Greenbelt 3 restaurant

Discover the fish dishes of Liechtenstein

DINING OUT

MANDARIN Oriental's The Tivoli presents the culinary wonders of Liechtenstein, which is located between Austria and Switzerland. To be featured on Jan. 10-18 are Fillet of Brook Char on ramato tomatoes in basil sauce; Fillet of River Perch in olive coat on champagne and grain mustard sauce; Fillet of Rouget in crisp potato coat served on sour cream sauce and sauce verte; Pan-fried Quail Breast on mashed potatoes with sauerkraut and black truffle sauce; Tournedos of Veal Tenderloin flavored with acacia honey in curry cream sauce; Anise-flavored Chocolate Soup with pineapple and ice orange; and Mascarpone parfait with cinnamon ice cream and rum-marinated fruits. Call 7508888.

WASABI offers a buffet lunch special which includes sushi, sashimi, noodles, teppanyaki, tempura, Ahi Special, Grilled Wasabi Chicken, Baked Scallop and #1 Special. Wasabi is located at Olympia Bldg., cor. Sto. Tomas St. and Makati Ave. Call 8404223.

PASHA features authentic Mediterranean cuisine based on centuries-old recipes. Feast on lamb, yoghurt salads, fish in olive oil, stuffed veggies, syrupy dough desserts, shish kebabs and flat breads simply presented. Pasha is located at the 2/L, Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati. Call 7574981-83.

DUSIT Hotel Nikko presents Tuesday Ladies Night at Fiesta San Miguel Restaurant and Bar. Lady guests will not only receive a rose but are also entitled to perks like 20-percent discount on food, a P200+ beer-all-you-can from 5:30 to 9 p.m., 50-percent discount on selected standard drinks from 5:30 p.m. onwards and complimentary pica-pica of the day. Birthday celebrants will receive a complimentary cake and a souvenir snapshot with friends. Call 8673333.

SUPER BLT. Greenwich Pizza offers a unique combination of crispy bacon, fresh lettuce and big, juicy tomatoes. Call 8194000.

Cooking classes for beginners

CLASSES at the Reggie Aspiras School of Culinary Arts resume with the Beginner's Series 2004.

Jan. 12—Crispy Fried Chicken: Learn eight fried chicken recipes (KFC, Max's, Herbed, *Bagoong*, Oven-baked, etc.) and side dishes, sauces, homemade catsup, etc.

Jan. 14—Roast Chicken Collection (all new): Roast Chicken with Bone Marrow and Mushroom Gravy, "Iberian Chicken" (Garlic Chicken), Curry Roast with Mango Chutney and Indian Pilaf, Roast Butter Chicken with Butter Sauce, Roast Chicken Galantina with side dishes.

Jan. 16—Korean 101: Kalbi-Chim (Korean Beef Rib Stew), Korean Barbeque (pork, chicken, beef, seafood), Kimchi Rice, *Chap Chae* (Stir Fried Noodles Korean Style), Mixed Vegetables.

Jan. 17—Gourmet Breakfast (all new, special class with over 14 recipes): Pancake and Waffle Bar—learn six different variations with all-new homemade syrups and fruit sauces, breakfast steaks and sausages; Egg Variations: omelettes and scrambled eggs gourmet style; Breakfast Casserole; Fruit Juices (P2,800 + ingredients).

Jan. 19—Authentic Japanese 101: Miso Soup with Snow Mushroom Salad, Chawan Mushi (Egg Custard), Sukiyaki, two Bento Box Meals (Grilled Gindara and Chicken Teriyaki) with Side Dishes, Kobe Steak Cooked Misono Style with Dipping Sauces and Japanese Fried Rice, Fruit Gelatin.

Jan. 21—All new traditional and classic roasts (special class): Roast Beef —Garlic, Crusted Roast Beef with Garlic Gravy, Mustard Roast Beef with Herbed Capsicum Sauce; My Classic Roast with Yorkshire Pudding served four ways—Au Jus, Caesar, Sundried Tomato and Wild Mushroom; Roast Pork with Corn Bread served three ways—with Creamy Gravy, Apple and Calvados Sauce, Curried Mango Chutney; Lamb Rack Roast with Baked Mixed Potatoes served three ways—Honey Glazed, Mint Chutney, and Raisin and Peppercorn Sauce (P2,800 + ingredients).

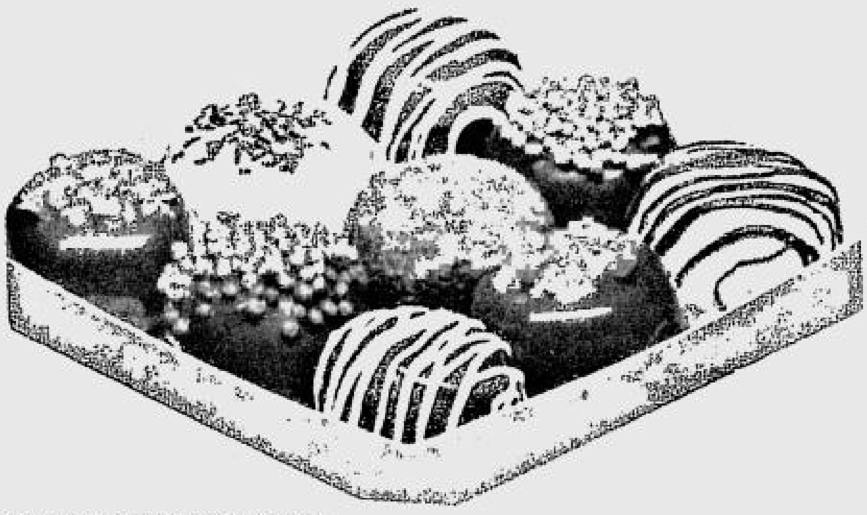
Jan. 23—Traditional Binalot (complete meals cooked in banana leaves): Fried Pork and Adobo Flakes with Chicharon Chips and Salted Egg Relish, Ginataang Sugpo and Gabi with Bagoong Rice, Tilapia with Shrimp Paste, Roasted Tomatoes and Caramelized Onions and Talaba Rice, Nilagang Tadyang na Baka with Pandan Rice and Bean Sprout Salad, Bulalo Steak with Fried Bulalo Rice and Mushroom Gravy with Spring Vegetables.

Jan. 24—Coffee Break (all new): three Doughnut Variations (Krispy Kreme, Boston Crème, etc.), the best Muffins ever (Giant Blue Berry, Corn and Triple Chocolate), Funnel Cake, Bread and Butter Pudding.

All cooking and baking classes start promptly at 10:30 a.m. Fee is P1,500 per session (excluding ingredients).

A selection of dishes to go is also available.

Call 9289296 or 9273008 (Cynthia) or 6335162 or 6474744 (Julius).



FRESH CHOCOLATEY IDEA
Mister Donut offers the new Belgian ChocoBites. Dressed like bonbons, all variants are yeast-raised dough, filled with Belgian chocolate filling and covered in rich chocolate coating. In silver boxes of nine or 12 pieces, they are available in Choco Drizzle, White Drizzle, Choco Sprinkle, White Sprinkle, Choco Checkers and Choco Flakes.

Consumer protection law has overlooked child safety

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

WE have a senior citizens' law for folks 60 years old and above. Why not a consumer protection law designed specially for children? A recent accident where a kid was hurt on the escalator of a shopping mall showed how the Consumer Protection Act of the Philippines overlooked the welfare of children.

Aside from public structures that are not safe for children, there's a wide range of products in the market posing risks to the health and safety of young consumers. The toy department of a store is teeming with potentially dangerous items—stuffed toys with buttons that could come off and be swallowed or be stuck in nostrils and ears, toys with sharp and rough edges that could wound or cause abrasion, wheels and hubs of mobile items that could break and hurt the rider or playmates, parts that could entrap fingers or limbs of curious kids.

Toys could break apart into small items and parts that could choke a child when swallowed. There are playpens with holes that could strangle or break the limbs of a small child. Paints can be scraped off and swallowed.

The long holiday gave us a chance to surf the Web and research safety standards for children's products. We came across the website of the Consumer Product Safety Commission in the United States which handles complaints from the public about dangerous household products (including children's items). Defective products can be recalled from the market or consumers can get a refund or a replacement for the defective product.

The closest government agency we have in the Philippines is the Bureau of Trade Regulation and Consumer Protection, but it falls short of expectation when it comes to children's products.

While surfing the Internet, we found a useful website—www.ConsumerReports.org—that gives an updated list of product recalls in the US. The list can guide us in choosing from the imported products that are flooding the market. We doubt, however, if we can return dangerous products if we happen to buy those in the local market.

Here are some previously recalled products to give us an idea of what to avoid when buying things for young children. We purposely omitted the brand name, product codes and the names of outlets. But we cited the number of items to give readers an idea of the volume of products released into the market.

- 50,000 pieces of wooden vehicles filled with candy. The wheels could break off into small parts that could choke small children.
- 21,400 pieces of plastic ride-on-toys with colorful beads attached to handlebars. A small child leaning forward could topple over the handlebars and suffer facial injuries.
- 27,000 pieces of children's chairs with cooler bags, complimentary gift items of hotels given to guests with children. When the chair collapses, the folding mechanism could crush or cut fingers. There was a report of a two-year-old losing a fingertip when the chair collapsed.
- 100,000 mini beach chairs that could collapse and crush or cut fingers and toes.
- 26,000 infant safety seats. When used as carrier, the handle could unexpectedly release, causing the infant to fall to the ground and suffer serious injury.

When buying for children, look for these other potential hazards:

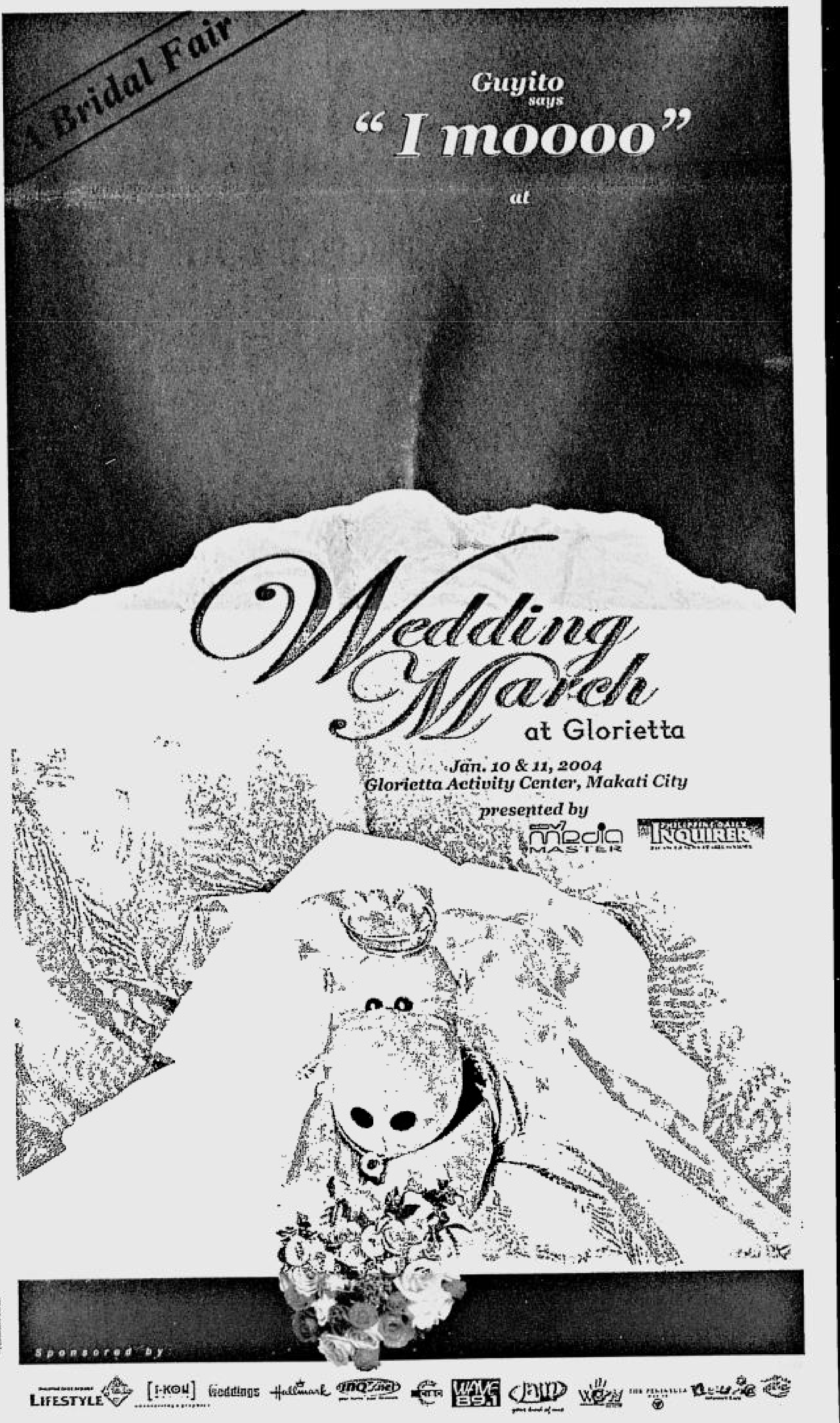
Small fillers in plastic rattles that can choke baby if the toy breaks apart; lettering or artwork on toys, cribs, and educational kits that may have been done with toxic leaded paint; high chairs with armrest or backrest that can entrap the head or arm of a child; plastic ride-on-toys that can break apart and cause rider to fall and suffer injury; and electric fan with widely spaced guard that can entrap a child's finger.

Commendable guards

Virginia G. (Philippine Textile Research Institute, Department of Science and Technology) is grateful to honest security guards of the Greenhills Shopping Center who returned her lost card case.

"I did not notice that my (card case) fell out of my bag when I pulled out the receipt... to retrieve my photos at the Island Photo Shop in Shoppesville. The (case) contained vital cards... (including) my ATM card. I was lucky that I was still in the vicinity when I overheard two guards looking for the owner of the (card case). They gave me back my cards after I identified myself as owner. They refused to accept the money I offered them. In my excitement, however, I forgot to get the names of the honest guards of Greenhills Shopping Center."

E-mail the author at mgiron@i-manila.com.ph



Ham it up

Holiday leftovers need not go to waste; you can use them sensibly in your everyday cooking

By Dorothy MJ Ferreria
Contributor

BY now most of us are cleaning out our refrigerators and making an inventory of what's left from the holidays.

For sure, many of us still have some ham and are looking for ways to use it sensibly in our everyday cooking. Here we have potato soup with ham, potato salad with ham and confetti rice.

You can also use chopped ham for omelet, sandwich spread or even pasta sauces. Before you know it, you won't have any leftover ham.

Potato Soup with Ham

¼ c butter or margarine
1 ½ c coarsely chopped onions
¼ c all-purpose flour
1 chicken broth cube
6 c water
4 c diced potatoes
1 ½ c spring onions sliced 1 ½ inches long
1 c chopped ham
2 c fresh milk
Black pepper to taste

Sauté onions in butter over medium heat. Add flour and chicken cube. Continue to cook until the flour is absorbed by the butter. Pour in water and potatoes.

Cover and allow to boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the potatoes are done.

Add spring onions, ham and milk. Season with black pepper and allow to boil briefly. Serve immediately.

Potato Salad with Ham

½ c mayonnaise
½ tsp prepared mustard
Salt and pepper to taste
2 c cubed and boiled potatoes
1 hard boiled egg, peeled and chopped
½ c chopped ham
¼ c finely chopped onions
¼ c coarsely chopped celery stalk
¼ c pickle relish

SLICED ham

Combine the ingredients in a mixing bowl. Chill for at least an hour before serving. If desired, sprinkle with some chopped cashew nuts before serving.

Confetti Rice

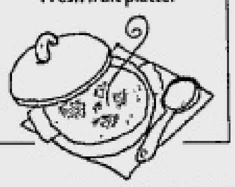
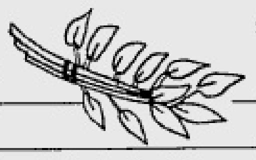
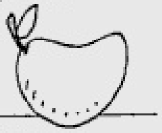
¼ c vegetable oil
2 tbsp minced garlic
½ c chopped onions
½ c chopped Baguio beans
½ c minced carrots
½ c chopped ham
3 c cooked rice
¼ c chopped spring onions
1 egg
2 tbsp soy sauce
Black pepper to taste

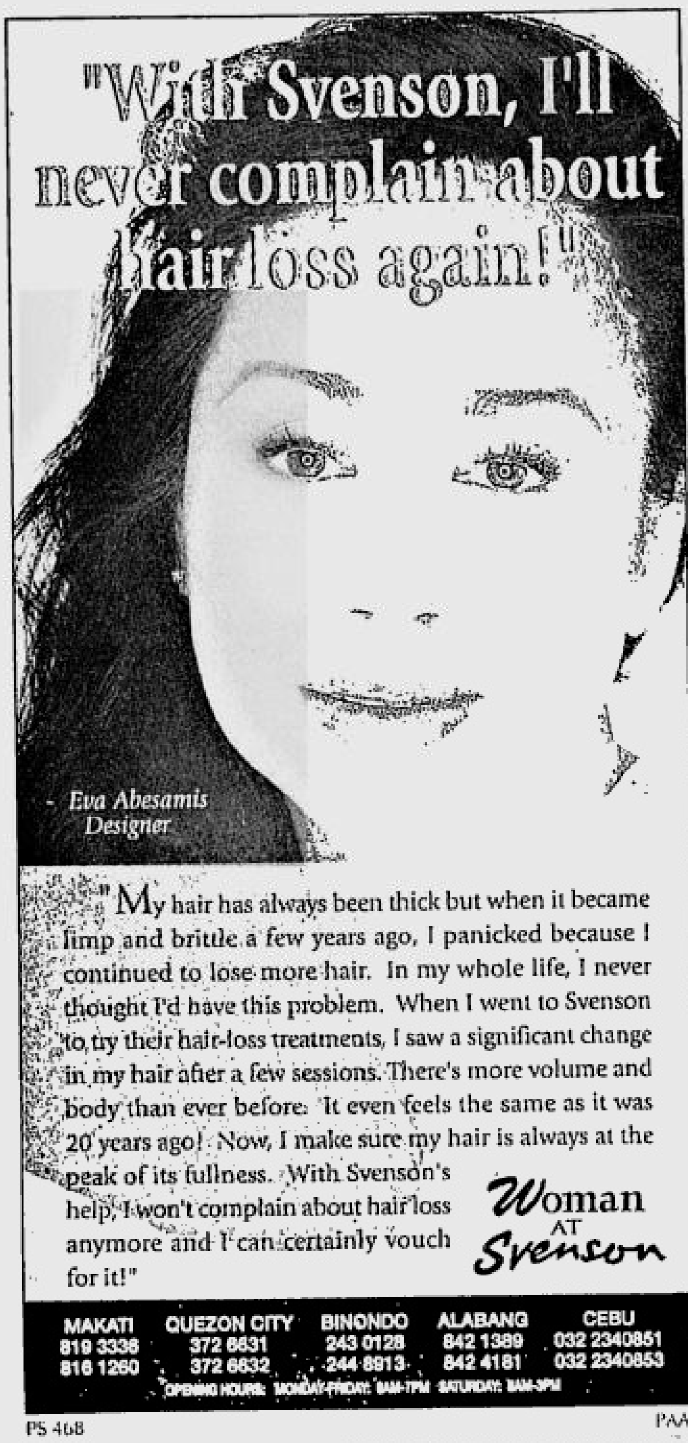
Sauté garlic and onions in oil. Then add beans and carrots. Continue to sauté until the beans and carrots are done. Add the ham and sauté briefly until blended.

Pour in the rice and the spring onions. Continue to mix until everything is well distributed. In a small bowl combine egg, soy sauce and black pepper. Beat with a fork until blended. Pour over the rice and mix until well incorporated.

Note: Use half the quantity of soy sauce required if using Chinese ham in the recipes.

Dorothy MJ Ferreria offers cooking, baking and cake decorating lessons at Dorothy's Cooking School in Quezon City. Call 7217735 or e-mail dorothyferreria@skyinet.net

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
MONDAY	Omelet with ham, bell pepper and cheese *Pandesal* Slices of cheese Coffee/hot chocolate/iced tea Papaya with calamansi	Potato soup with ham Fried chicken wings Rice Fresh fruit salad 	Steamed tilapia with ginger and onion stuffing *Adobong kangkong* Rice Gelatin with fruit cocktail
TUESDAY	Oatmeal sprinkled with raisins and cinnamon powder Chicken hotdog Loaf bread Coffee/carrot juice Bananas with cottage cheese or yogurt	Instant cream of asparagus soup Coleslaw Beef steak with onion rings Rice Melon ala mode	Arroz ala cubana Fresh fruit platter 
WEDNESDAY	*Daing na bangus* Salted eggs and tomato salad Coffee/hot chocolate/iced tea Chilled melon	Clear soup Potato salad with ham Breaded fish fillet with lemon butter sauce Leftover fruitcake	*Sinampalukang manok* Rice *Minatamis na saba*
THURSDAY	Tuna sandwich spread Whole wheat pandesal Cheese platter Coffee/hot chocolate/carrot pineapple juice Grapes	Spaghetti with white sauce and leftover ham Garlic bread Mocha ice cream with homemade coffee jelly	Pork menudo Rice Fresh fruit platter
FRIDAY	Cereal and milk Vienna sausage Soft boiled eggs Loaf bread Cheese platter Coffee/hot chocolate Sliced apples and oranges	Roast chicken Confetti rice Canned peaches with ice 	Clam (halaan) soup with *malunggay* leaves Beef tapa Rice Sweetened garbanzos
SATURDAY	*Paksiw na tilapia* Coffee/iced tea Ripe mangoes 	Pork *pata kare kare* Rice *Turon na saba* ala mode 	Chicken mami Siomai Almond jelly
SUNDAY	 Assorted *kakanin* Coffee/hot herbal tea/ginger brew (*salabat*) Fresh fruit platter	Chicken adobo with quail eggs *Gisadong gulay* Rice Cassava bibingka 	Corn soup with ham Shrimp tempura Rice Buko salad



"With Svenson, I'll never complain about hair loss again!"

- Eva Abesamis
Designer

"My hair has always been thick but when it became limp and brittle a few years ago, I panicked because I continued to lose more hair. In my whole life, I never thought I'd have this problem. When I went to Svenson to try their hair-loss treatments, I saw a significant change in my hair after a few sessions. There's more volume and body than ever before. It even feels the same as it was 20 years ago! Now, I make sure my hair is always at the peak of its fullness. With Svenson's help, I won't complain about hair loss anymore and I can certainly vouch for it!"

Woman AT Svenson

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816 1260	372 6632	244 8913	842 4181	032 2340853

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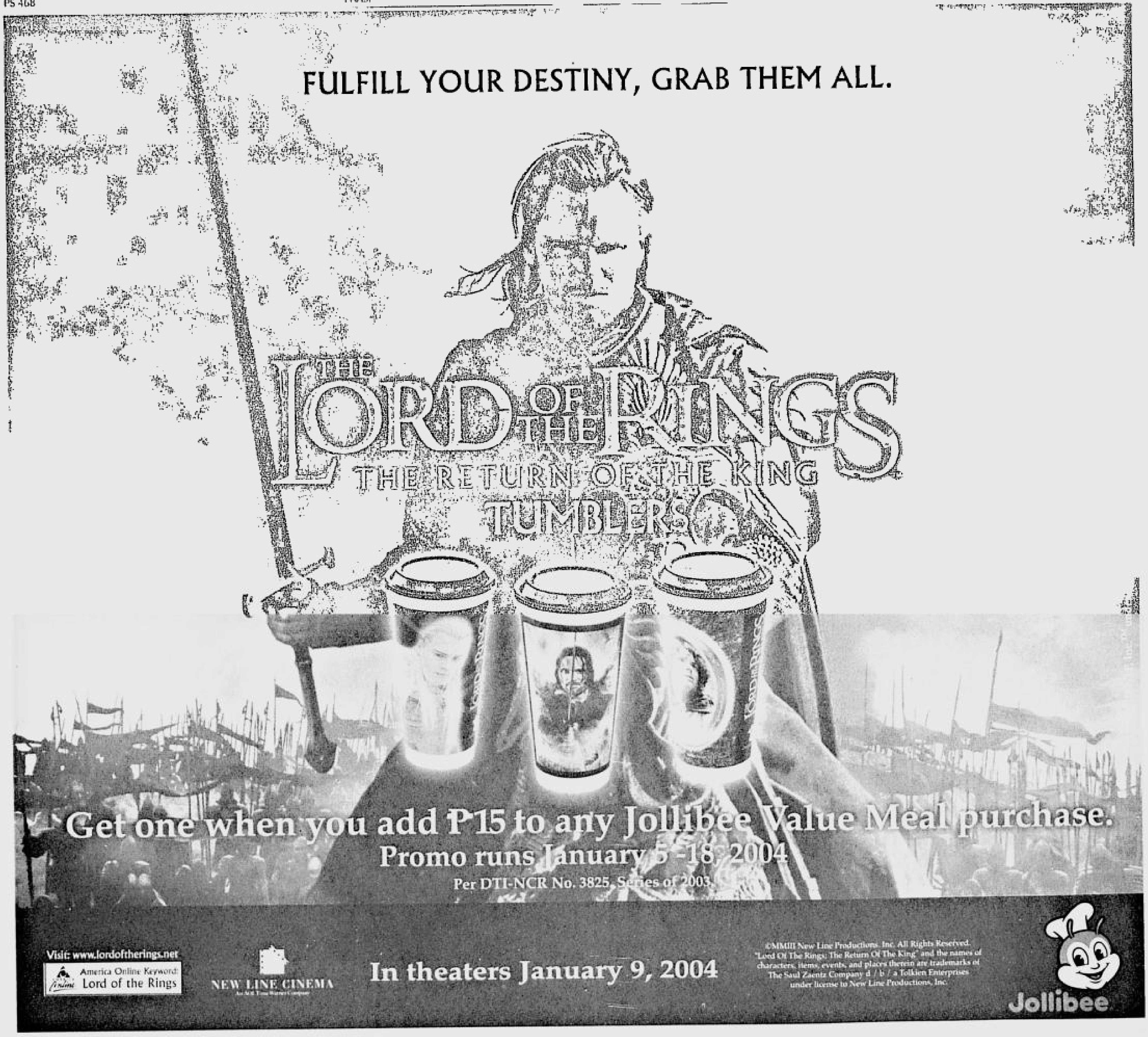
PS 468
PAASI



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Since its inception in 1979, the Metrobank Foundation has pursued but one aim: to help enhance the well being of Filipinos and thus make an enduring contribution to nation building.

As the philanthropic arm of one of the country's biggest financial conglomerates, the Metrobank Foundation embodies the Metrobank Group's commitment to make social investments in and for our people. Through its landmark programs in education, health care and the visual arts, as well as its active grant-making initiatives, the Foundation inspires, empowers and honors the best in the Filipino.

"Our greatest motivation to be the best in the business field is the generation of more resources to share with society whose support is responsible for our success."

Dr. George S. K. Ty
Chairman
Metrobank Foundation, Inc.

With an endowment fund amounting to P 600 Million established by Dr. Ty in 1993, supplemented with a P 1.2 Billion donation he made in 1999, the Foundation has raised the bar in corporate giving and social philanthropy. Its network of partners includes over 400 socio-civic and charitable organizations throughout the country. In addition, the Foundation has extended grants to foreign governments and international organizations working for the welfare of the Filipino community in various countries around the world as well as to mitigate the effects of natural and man-made calamities that befell some of our Asian neighbors.

"The beautiful example of openness, international solidarity and outstanding philanthropy shown by Mr. George Ty through the Metrobank Foundation needs to be emulated by many more who have been blessed in life."

Former President Corazon C. Aquino

As we celebrate 25 years of being one of the country's leading advocates of corporate social responsibility, we re-affirm our commitment to make a difference in the lives of our people and make even more meaningful contributions to the Filipino community.

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METROBANK FOUNDATION, INC.
Member, League of Corporate Foundations, Inc.

Metrobank Foundation at 25: In the Business of Making Social Investments for and in the Filipino

As one of the country's leading proponents of corporate social responsibility, the Metrobank Foundation is an active partner in nation building. From honoring outstanding teachers to building houses for the poor to restoring the eyesight of indigent patients with cataracts, the Foundation's interventions are aimed at making a difference in the lives of our people and help bring about social development in our communities. Through its programs in education, visual arts and health care, the Foundation focuses on bringing out and honoring the best in the Filipino. At the same time, by supporting similarly worthwhile initiatives of other socio-civic and charitable organizations, the Foundation effectively expands the impact of its involvement in corporate citizenship.

Promoting a Culture of Excellence in Education

The Foundation's flagship program is the Search for Outstanding Teachers. An annual recognition program that was established in 1985, the Search has honored a total of 226 teachers from all over the country for their exemplary achievements. As models of professionalism, competence and integrity, these teachers serve as models for their peers and inspire others in the pursuit of excellence as an ethic.

In partnership with the Mathematics Teachers Association of the Philippines, the Foundation likewise sponsors the Metrobank Math Challenge, an annual competition for elementary and high school students from both public and private schools nationwide. Aside from helping increase interest in Math among our children and providing them with a venue to hone their skills, the competition fosters the values of discipline, hard work and team effort among the young.

Since 1995, the Foundation has provided scholarship grants to poor and deserving students all over the country. In partnership with more than 30 colleges and universities, the Foundation's College Scholarship Program has produced more than 300 graduates who are now part of the country's pool of skilled human resources. Aside from financial assistance, the Foundation provides its scholars with supplementary training on leadership and values formation, as well as skills that will help them become well-rounded individuals who are better disposed to be of service to the community.

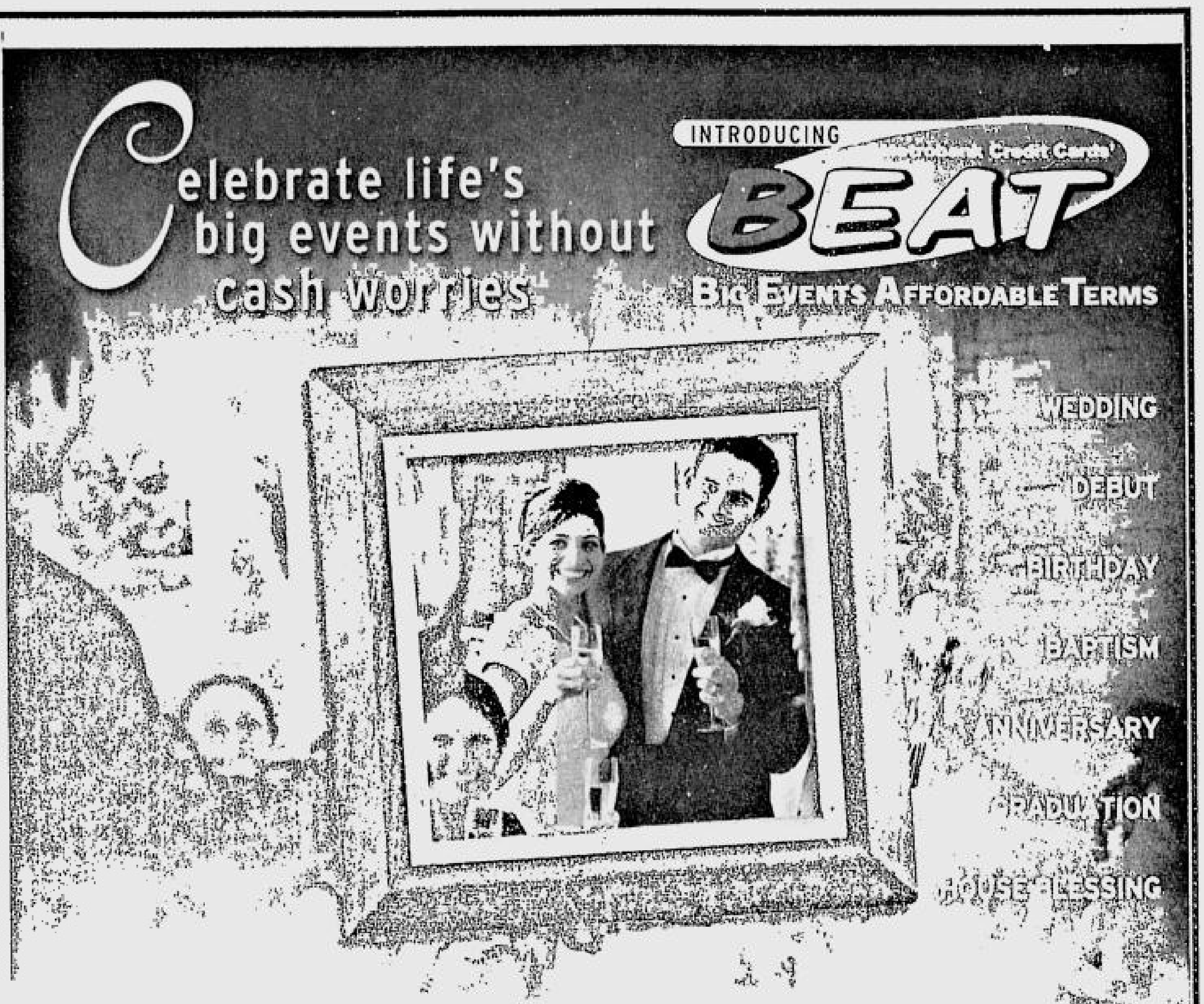
Ensuring Wellness through Quality Medical Care

The Metrobank Foundation is the majority owner of the Manila Doctors Hospital, a tertiary medical institution founded in 1956 and is now among the country's leading centers of wellness. As part of an ongoing expansion program, the Foundation actively supports the construction of new facilities and the acquisition of modern hospital equipment.

To allow more indigent patients to avail of quality medical services addition, the Foundation allocates some P 6 Million annually to fund the Hospital's Social Service Program, which includes subsidies for patients in charity wards, medical missions in under-served areas of the country, and community outreach projects in Maricaban, an urban poor community in Pasay City that the Hospital has adopted under the "Sama-sama sa Malusog na Barangay" Program.

In support of the World Health Organization's 20/20 Program and similar initiatives by the Department of Health, the Foundation also implements the Share the Gift of Vision Program, a free cataract operation that has so far benefited close to 1,000 elderly indigent patients who have regained their eyesight.

Through the Hospital's educational affiliate, the Manila Doctors College, the Foundation makes an important contribution to the training of world class professionals in the field of nursing services. A Level II accredited nursing institution by the Philippine Association of Accredited Schools, Colleges and Universities, the college was recently granted Deregulated Status by the Commission on Higher Education.



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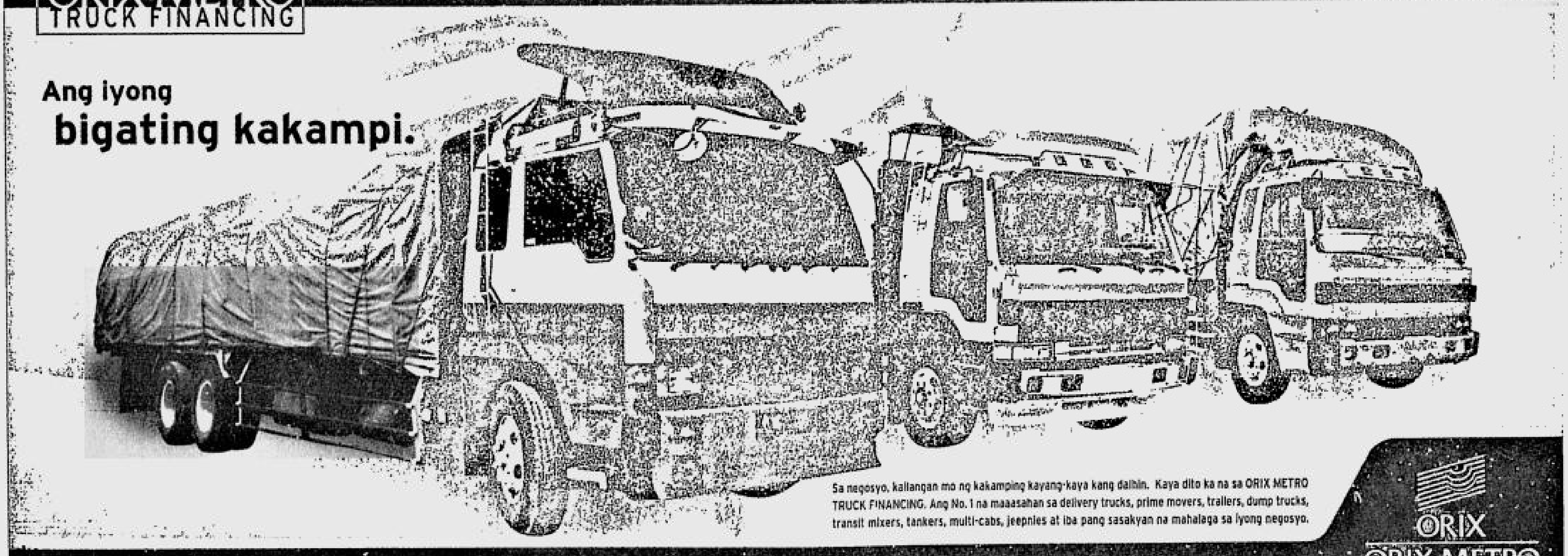

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>1979

Metrobank Foundation was incorporated on January 8

Acquires controlling interest in the Manila Doctors Hospital and begins expansion program to increase bed capacity and procure modern hospital equipment

>1984

Launching of the National Painting Competition

Inauguration of the Manila Doctors Hospital's Medical Arts Center

>1985

Launching of the Search for Outstanding Teachers, the first national recognition program for educators

>1986

Establishes the Search for Outstanding Chinese Teachers

>1991

Inauguration of the Norberto Ty Medical Tower

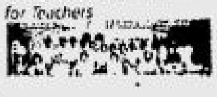
Becomes one of the founding members of the League of Corporate Foundations

>1993

Dr. Ty makes a "Gift of Social Development", donating 1 million shares of stocks, then worth approximately P 600 Million, as an endowment fund

>1994

Beginning of a recognition program for topnotchers of the Licensure Examination for Teachers



Institutes an undergraduate college scholarship program in China

Sponsors a total of five seminars for the improvement of English Language Teaching for local teachers

Disburses humanitarian grants and other similar causes in China, Taiwan, Korea, East Timor and New York, United States

Sponsors 10 scholars from China to take up their Masters in Finance at the Asian Institute of Management

Begins institutional partnerships with the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines

>1995

Election of an Executive Director and recruitment of full-time staff

Launches a Stipend Program for teachers in Regional Science High schools around the country

Funds a total of 15 workshops for members of major media institutions all over the country

Launching of the multi-year College Scholarship Program

Disbursements for projects in support of the Filipino-Chinese community reaches the P 6 Million mark

>1996

Holds first Strategic Planning and Vision-Mission workshop

Launches re-formatted National Painting Competition to become the Young Painters Annual

Metrobank Foundation, Inc. >Celebrating 25 Years

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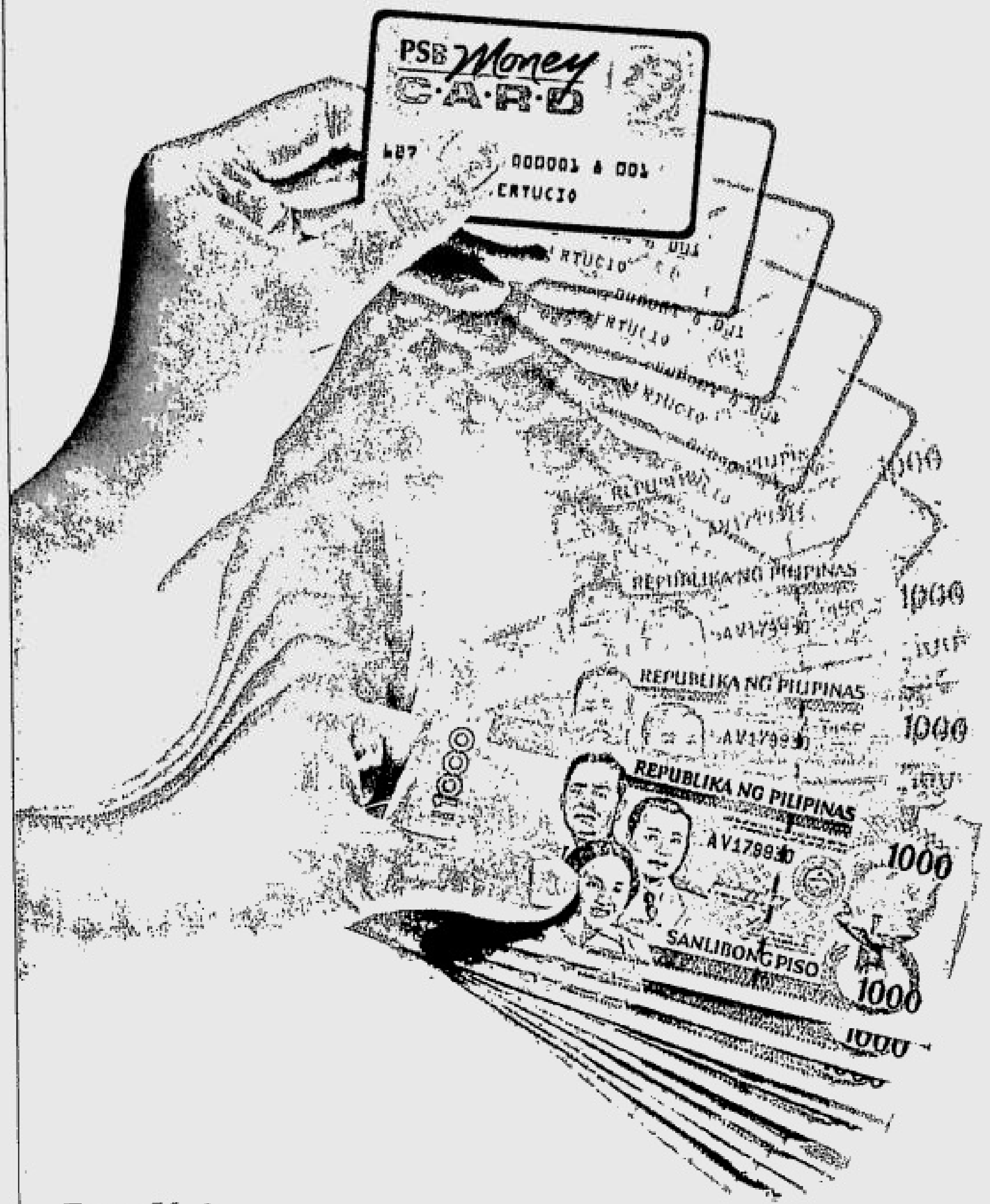


Fostering Creativity

In 1984, at a time when the country was experiencing social and economic turmoil, the Foundation started a national painting competition to help channel the energies of the youth into more productive pursuits. At the same time, the competition serves as a venue for talented amateur visual artists to hone their craft and ultimately launch a career in painting. Since then, under the Inspiration, Development of Skill, Exposure and Arts Application or I.D.E.A. Framework, the Young Painters Annual has evolved into a comprehensive program for the arts that supports not just painters, but a network of organizations in the local art community.

Aside from giving a boost to fledgling young artists by recognizing their talent, providing them with cash incentives, and exposing their work to a larger milieu, the program assists its past winners break into the professional art world by helping fund their first solo exhibits. Just as importantly, the Foundation supports the flourishing of talent at the grassroots level by funding arts-related seminars and workshops conducted by local arts associations. In an effort to facilitate enhance interest in and appreciation of the arts, the Foundation also maintains an active partnership with national arts organizations such as the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, the Arts Association of Philippines, and a host of museums and art galleries, among others.

The Excellence Awards Program: Honoring the Best in the Filipino

In recognition of the important role of our men and women in uniform, the Foundation has expanded its recognition programs for outstanding Filipinos to include members of the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Through the search for the Country's Outstanding Policeman in Service (COPS) and The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (TOPS), the Foundation aims to boost the morale and honor the professionalism, gallantry, integrity and competence our police and military personnel. Implemented in partnership with the Rotary Club of New Manila East and the Rotary Club of Makati Metro, respectively, these programs pay tribute to policemen and soldiers who have had exemplary career achievements and outstanding community involvement in the performance of their tasks.

Harnessing Social Partnerships

While its flagship programs are in the fields of education, visual arts and health care, the Foundation is involved in many other areas of social development through its network of institutional partners, including government line agencies. Recently awarded by the Benigno Aquino Foundation as one of the first twenty recipients of People Power People Award, the Foundation's selective but dynamic partnerships has allowed it to make substantial social investments in crucial social development projects that has benefited a cross-section of the population, such as socialized housing for the poor, the environment, and livelihood, among others.

The Foundation is also a founding member and actively participates in the League of Corporate Foundations, a network of more than 50 CSR organizations affiliated with the top business entities in the country. Its Executive Director served as LCF President in 1999-2000.

Dr. George S. K. Ty: Making Business Work for Society's Bottom Line

From the very beginning, Dr. Ty believed that leadership in the business arena implied leadership in community service as well. When he established the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Company in 1962 at the age of 29, he envisioned the Bank as a key player not only in the financial services industry, but in social development as well. As means of sharing with society the fruits of his success, he eventually founded the Metrobank Foundation in 1979. More than the financial resources with which the Foundation has made considerable contributions to nation building, Dr. Ty has provided the inspiration for the Foundation's various initiatives in corporate philanthropy.

Born in Hong Kong to ethnic Chinese nationals who migrated to the Philippines, Dr. Ty was reared in the spartan conservative environment of hard-working immigrant parents. As such, his discipline and work ethic have become the core values of an institutional culture that continues to drive the growth and success of Metrobank. Aside from banking, his keen business sense has allowed the Bank to diversify and strengthen its commercial portfolio, which currently includes interests in insurance, investment banking and other financial services, car manufacturing and dealership, real estate, travel and information technology, among others.

As an outstanding member of the business community and an exemplary philanthropist, Dr. Ty has received numerous awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Asian Bankers Association (2000), The Outstanding Filipino Award or TOFIL (2002), the Outstanding Manilan Award (2001), and the Lifetime Achievement Award of the Jose Rizal Awards of Excellence (2002). He is also a recipient of a number of honorary degrees from some of the country's most prestigious universities, including the University of the Philippines (1999), the Centro Escolar University (1990), and the Philippine Normal University (2001).

(standing, left to right):
Alfred Vy Ty, Aniceto M. Sobrepena, James Go, Diosdado M. Macapagal, Jr. (representing President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo), Antonio S. Abacan, Jr., Jimmy T. Tang, George S. K. Ty, Patricio L. Lim, Placido L. Mapa, Jr. Cesar E. A. Virata, and Arthur Vy Ty;

(seated, left to right):
Mary Vy Ty, Marixi R. Prieto, former President Corazon C. Aquino, Mila G. Drilon, and Elvira Ong Chan.

The officers and members of the Board of Trustees and Advisers of the Metrobank Foundation, Inc.

>1997

Operating budget reaches P100 million mark

>1998

Establishes the Textile Gallery in the new National Museum in celebration of The Centennial of Philippine Independence

Grant extended to the UP Open University for the creation of the under graduate curriculum distance learning materials

Partners with the DOH in its Center for Wellness Program through the training for health professionals in 52 retained hospitals.

>1999

Dr. Ty donates an additional P 1.2 Billion in endowment funds through the "Gift of Gratitude"

Begins a partnership with the Philippine Jaycees for the conduct of the search for The Outstanding Policemen of the Philippines

Partners with the Rotary Club of Makati-Metro for the search for The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers

Launches the search for The Outstanding Members of the Judiciary in partnership with the Foundation for Judicial Excellence

Commemorates 15 years of the Young Painters' Annual through a Retrospective Exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum

Launches Sama-Sama sa Malusog na Barangay program, a comprehensive community health outreach at Sitio Puting Bato in Navotas

>2000

Awards its first batch of winners of the Search for Outstanding Journalists in partnership with the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communications

Becomes a millennium partner of the Philippine National Red Cross with a P5 million endowment

>2001

Launches the Gift of Vision, a prevention program for indigents

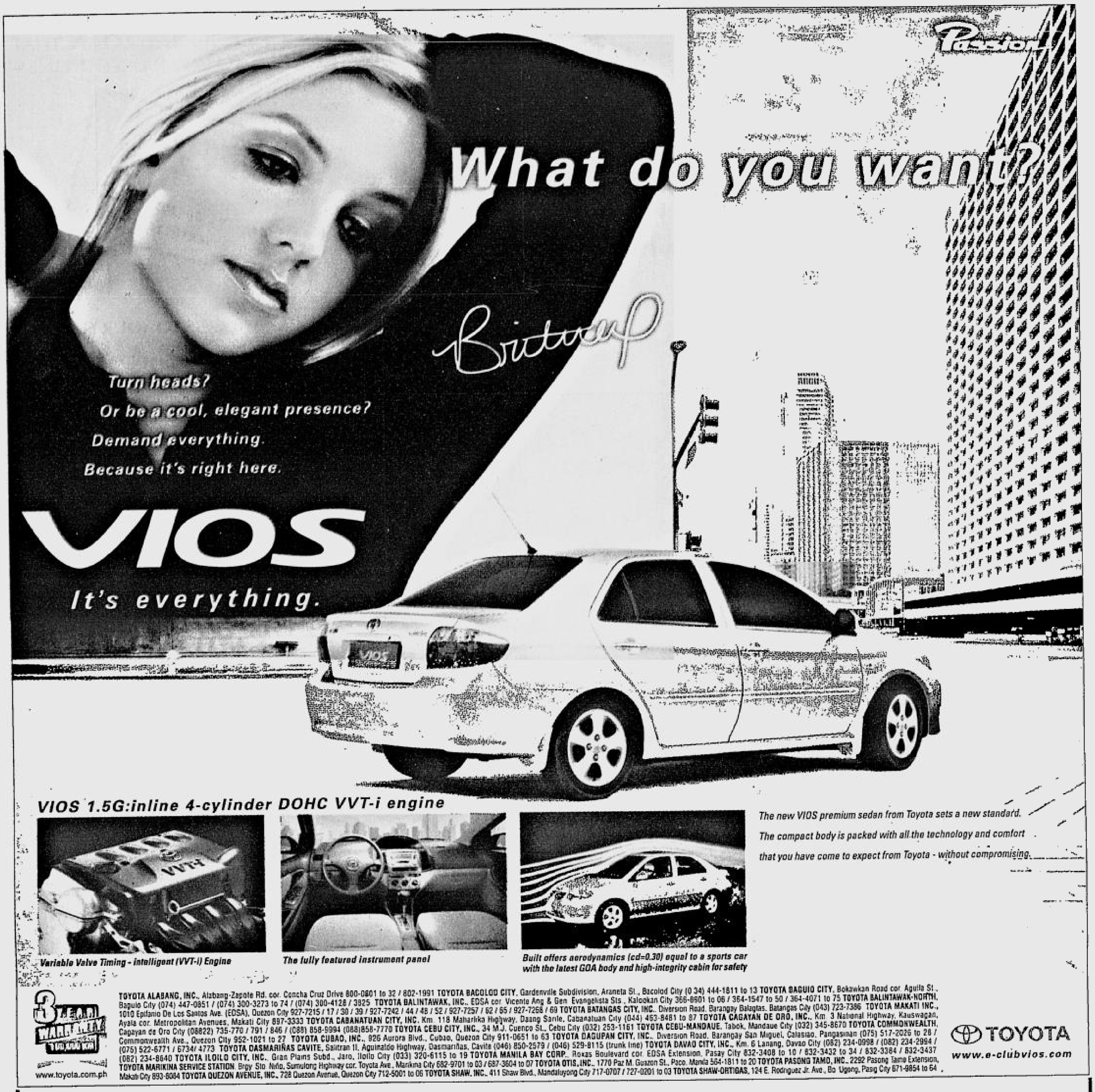
>2002

Joins the Rotary Club of New Manila East for a new recognition program for members of the Philippine National Police, the search for the Country's Outstanding Policemen in Service or COPS

>2003

Construction begins on the new Manila Doctors College at the Metropolitan Park

of Responsible Corporate Citizenship



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After a quarter of a century of spearheading the Metrobank Group's corporate social responsibility initiatives, the Metrobank Foundation has established a benchmark among corporate foundations in terms of program delivery. Aside from institutional awards, various award-giving bodies have recognized many of its programs as outstanding examples of successful and effective CSR practices. Among the awards received by the Foundation are the following:

AWARD	AWARD SPONSOR	YEAR
1. People Power Award	Benigno S. Aquino Foundation	2003
2. Agora Award for Excellence in Advocacy Marketing	Philippine Marketing Association	2003
3. Gawad Oscar Florendo Award for Outstanding NGO Program in Support of Government, The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers	Public Relations Organization of the Philippines	2003
4. Anvil Award of Merit, The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	2003
5. Anvil Award of Merit, Institutional Audio Visual Presentation	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	2003
6. Huwarang Pilipino Award, Corporate Foundation	Radyo ng Bayan	2003
7. Gold Quill Award of Merit, Search for Outstanding Teachers	International Association of Business Communicators, Philippine Chapter	2002
8. Anvil Award of Merit, First National Metrobank Math Challenge	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	2002
9. Gawad Oscar Florendo Award for Outstanding NGO Program in Support of Government, Search for Outstanding Teachers	Public Relations Organization of the Philippines	2002
10. Huwarang Pilipino Award, Corporate Foundation	Radyo ng Bayan	2002
11. Anvil Award of Excellence, Search for Outstanding Teachers	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	2001
12. Anvil Award of Merit, Young Painters Annual	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	2000
13. Asian Banking Award for Social Responsibility	Asian Bankers Association & the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific	1999
14. Institutional Award for Teacher Recognition	Reading Association of the Philippines	1995
15. Anvil Award as Outstanding Institutional PR Program, Search for Outstanding Teachers	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	1986
16. Anvil Award as Outstanding Special Events Program, Young Painters Annual	Public Relations Society of the Philippines	1985

THE ASIA PACIFIC BANKERS CONGRESS

Asian Banking Award for Social Responsibility

Agora Award for Excellence in Advocacy Marketing

In the case of the Asian Banking Award for Corporate Social Responsibility, Metrobank established a record by being the first Philippine bank in the Asia-Pacific region to be recognized for the corporate social responsibility programs of the Metrobank Foundation. On the other hand, the Foundation earned the distinction of becoming the first corporate foundation to be so honored in the 24-year history of the Agora Awards and the pioneer awardee in the category of "Advocacy Marketer of the Year."